

Circle Update

January 2017



Circle of Wine
Writers

IN THIS ISSUE: Ribera del Duero • Laura Catena • Wine's future in pictures

From the editor: **Wink Lorch**

Let's get the facts straight and edited too

Alternative facts, fake news and controlling press officers are all in world news as I write this, my final editorial for *Circle Update*. I have not managed to complete even 10% of the number of issues that my predecessor Jim Budd did as editor, but I hope that you have enjoyed the seven issues I have edited, including this one. My overriding concern with anything I have ever edited has been to studiously check that all copy is free of 'alternative facts', provides real and not fake news, and to ensure that it has been written without too much undue influence of controlling PRs.

In our internet age, it is often thought that skilled writers, who know their subject well, do not require more than a cursory edit, if any intervention at all. And today, the editing rot reaches much further than the internet. The few times I read a print newspaper or magazine, it's rare that I don't find a mistake; and in the cash-strapped book publishing world I have noticed increasingly poorly-edited books, and book reviewers are picking up on it, too. I care about this, but maybe I am simply too old-fashioned or anal, like those who criticise text-speak or bad grammar use on shop signs or social media. Apostrophes, anyone?

As a writer, I love being edited, because one simply cannot properly analyse one's own writing. However, all communicators should be reminded to verify before submitting

copy: facts should be facts, news should be real and PR information should be used only in support, but not for the ultimate story.

Our writers for this issue include some with many years of meticulous writing under their tasting belts, notably Stephen Brook, who muses on his latest visit to Ribera del Duero, and Steven Spurrier, who reports on the CWW Greek tasting, as well as on a very fine and rare wine tasting weekend. A more recently-established wine writer, Christine Havens, writes about meeting with Laura Catena for a fascinating discussion on climate change, altitude and more. My thanks to them and to all our writers for this issue, as well as to Amanda Barnes and Robert Smyth, my interviewees for the 'Meet the member' feature – during my tenure you've now met 14 of our 254 members.

For this final issue of the Circle's newsletter in pdf format, I decided to put the focus on our professional photographer members and give them a little showcase, which begins on page 16. I'm proud of the result and want to offer my thanks to those who responded to my rather difficult request for a selection of photos reflecting the future of the wine world. A couple of bonus pictures are provided elsewhere in the issue.

My gratitude goes finally to all those who have supported and encouraged me during my short stint as editor of *Circle Update*, especially: former editor and ex-chairman Jim Budd; our administrator Andrea Warren; my partner, Brett Jones, who helps me with photographs; and most particularly to not only my deputy editor for the first two issues, Liz Sagues, who has continued to advise when needed, but also my deputy editor for this issue and the previous four, Robert Smyth, without whom... May I salute all Circle Update readers and raise my glass to future incarnations of this newsletter.



Circle Update: the newsletter of the Circle of Wine Writers

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Circle Update will be replaced in 2017 by an online newsletter. Current subscribers are invited to apply to become **Friends of the Circle**, once their subscriptions runs out (see details on page 7). For more information, please contact Andrea Warren. Membership enquiries should also be directed to her.

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Back cover: Winemakers pressing Pinot Noir during the 2016 harvest at Cristom Vineyards in Oregon's Eola-Amity Hills, Willamette Valley. Photo by **Bob Holmes**.

These photos were among the submissions for our CWW photographers' look to the future feature that begins on page 16.

Membership of the Circle of Wine Writers (www.circleofwinewriters.org) is open to accredited wine journalists and other professionals communicating in the media about wine. As such, it is editorial policy to give the editor and each writer for *Circle Update* freedom to express his or her views. It must therefore be stressed that the Circle as an organisation does not formally associate itself with the opinions expressed by contributors, except where this is specifically stated.

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From the chairman: Colin Hampden-White

In praise of diversity and adaptability

I was saddened to hear of the passing of Charlotte Lessing and Leo Zanelli. Although they were not known to me personally, many of you knew them well and will join me in sending condolences to their families.

This year, two members of the committee have served the maximum time allowed. Vivienne Franks and Angela Reddin will be stepping down from the committee at the AGM in May. I am incredibly grateful to them for the immense amount of work they have put in, for their advice, guidance and support. The Circle would not be able to exist without the hard work of the members of the committee. I believe that the work in which we are involved for the Circle of Wine Writers is rewarding and enjoyable and, as volunteers, I have great admiration for the work the rest of the committee carries out.

With the departure of both Vivienne and Angela, we welcome members who would like to contribute to the committee to help continue our work and keep the Circle moving upward, supporting our communicators and bringing the world of wines and spirits ever-closer. At the moment we have 12 members on the committee. Our maximum number can be 14, so we have four places we would very much like to be filled. If you would like to join us, please do let Andrea know.

I look forward to the remainder of 2017 with plenty of optimism for those who work in wines and spirits. And, I hope to see many of you soon.

In the current state of global uncertainty, it is heartening to see the world of wines and spirits forge forward. I hear nothing but optimism from both categories; there appears to be a willingness to be adaptable, whatever the situation, and to embrace diversity.

Within our membership, I see this diversity. No longer are we pigeon-holed into one category of communication. I see more writers educating, photographers writing and many of us being involved in multiple disciplines. I am very pleased that at the Circle of Wine Writers we have always embraced the world of spirits as well, and have seen an increase recently of spirits writers joining our membership. It is also good to see many of our photographers highlighted in this issue reminding us of the diverse talents within the Circle.

We continue to be an international organisation and hope to build on this with further trips and events outside of the UK, and we are fortunate to have a growing membership beyond Britain. With our online platforms coming very soon, it will give us further opportunities to demonstrate our international standing.



The photo above is Colin's contribution to the editor's theme of the future seen through the eyes of our photographers. He writes: 'It's a challenge to express the future, yet recognise the past, in one photograph. The portrait above encapsulates for me a bond between the interconnected universe of wines and spirits. The subject is Henry Matson, a very talented wine merchant working for Farr Vintners. It was taken at the 70s-themed fancy dress birthday party of Krzysztof Maruszewski in Poland, early last year. Krzysztof is publisher and founder of Whisky quarterly, and has recently added a specialist wine magazine to his portfolio. Henry is in his 30s, dressed as Ziggy Stardust in an American spacesuit, sipping a gin martini. The picture encapsulates wine, whisky, cocktails, internationalism and youth, and a nod to the past at the passing of David Bowie.'



Circle of Wine Writers

Membership changes and news

We are very pleased to welcome three new members to the Circle: **Dave Alcock**, **Douglas Blyde** and **Trevor Gulliver**.

Dave Alcock

Based in Bristol, Dave works as both a writer and an HCPC registered psychologist. His writing focuses mainly on the world of whisky and more



specifically, the 'experience' of whisky (this is where his 30+ years as a psychologist comes in!). He writes for *Whisky quarterly* magazine and for his blog, The Whisky Dramalista. Published articles include 'How we evaluate whisky'; 'James Bond & whisky'; 'Interviews with whisky cognoscenti', and 'aesthetics & whisky'. His journey into writing in this arena began with his passion for whisky; its history, its romance, its unique and unifying qualities, and the growing desire to share that passion with others. From a psychological perspective, he is interested in and currently researching the relationship between whisky and personal histories such as what memories certain drams evoke or how do they make you feel.

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Douglas Blyde



Douglas is a journalist, consultant and presenter on food and drink. His work includes a weekly drinks column in ES (the magazine of the *London Evening Standard*), independent gastronomy consultancy to brands, banks and media, and presenter to lifestyle media and corporates. He has been described by ES as 'one of the most respected (and well-fed) experts on eating out in the capital...' Memorable experiences on his journey of tastes have included dining in, then ultimately legitimately escaping from, the restaurant at the high security prison, HMP Highdown; shooting, being blooded by, then eating grouse for lunch on the Glorious Twelfth of August in the Highlands, malt in hand; as well as regular missions further afield, including to Lebanon, North and South America, and the winelands of South Africa. Design and detail are a particular interest.

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Trevor Gulliver

Trevor is a wine and restaurant writer and lecturer, and is co-proprietor of the internationally-reputed restaurant St. John in Smithfield, London.

Trevor created the restaurant's in-house wine company, St. John, which only works directly with winemakers as well as its own winery in La Livinière en Minervois, France. He writes a regular blog post for the St. John Wines website. Over the years, Trevor has been responsible for several other restaurants, bars, wine bars, a microbrewery and a bakery. He set up the bars and restaurants for the original Vinopolis project. He judges and speaks regularly both in the UK and overseas and has led tours in Burgundy and Languedoc-Roussillon. Trevor writes a regular column for *Country & Town House* magazine and occasional articles for the Food & Drink section in *The Guardian* and *Noble Rot* among other publications. He has also broadcast on BBC Radio and TV, as well as on Channel 4.

Address: 26 St John Street, London, EC1M 4AY

Tel: 020 7553 9842 Mobile: 07984711790

Email: tg@stjohnrestaurant.com

Website: www.stjohnwines.co.uk

New contact details

Jo Burzynska has a new temporary address:

87 Phillip Street, Birchgrove, Sydney, NSW 2041, Australia

Jancis Robinson MW has a new address:

Apartment 93, 1-5 Canal Reach, King's Cross, London, N1C 4AZ

Continued overleaf

Retired status

Brett Jones
Jill Norman

Resignations

Tom Lewis
Grahame Martin
Henrik Mattson
Carol Whitehead

Charlotte Lessing RIP

The Circle currently has 254 members.

News about members

Recognition

The 2016 Born Digital Wine Awards by Wine in Moderation:

We congratulate **Amanda Barnes**, who was the winner of the category for Best Tourism Content with a Focus on Wine for her post on 80 Harvests titled 'A guide to Ica: Dipping into Peru's Wine Lands'; **Colin Hampden-White** who was the winner of the photo category for his photo of Didier Depond of Champagne Salon; and **Wink Lorch** who was placed third in the category for Best Editorial/Opinion Wine Writing for her post on wine-searcher.com titled 'Don't Supersize my Wine Glass'. This piece also won Wink the Responsibility Award, sponsored by Wine in Moderation. Jim Budd has since re-named Wink, 'Madame Modération'. All received cash prizes.

Fellowships to the Symposium for professional wine writers at Meadowood Napa Valley:

The symposium, which takes place in February, has awarded fellowships to four Circle members – **Amanda Barnes**, **Christine Havens**, **Meg Houston Maker** and **Cathrine Todd**. We hope they experience a rewarding time at the symposium.

Colin Hampden-White's award-winning photo of Didier Depond of Champagne Salon.

Books

Caroline Henry's crowd-funded book, *Terroir Champagne, the Luxury of Sustainable, Organic and Biodynamic Cuvées* is now available in e-book form. The print version will be available in February. For details about how to purchase, see: <http://terroirchampagne.com/buy-the-book/>.

Other news

Jo Burzynska has temporarily relocated to Sydney, Australia, to start a PhD researching the interaction between taste and sound at the University of New South Wales.

In December, **Per and Britt Karlsson** marked 20 years of writing about wine on their own site on the internet, probably (according to Per) the first wine website in Sweden... Read more about how they view the development and changes on the internet in the last 20 years on their BKWine site at: <https://goo.gl/L4vHt4>.

Tanya Mann and her husband Stephen have opened a boutique hotel near Stansted airport in Essex, east of London. The hotel has nine rooms and Tanya is offering a 15% discount on rooms to Circle members. Contact stay@lindenhousestansted.co.uk or Andrea Warren for details. In January, on the same site, they also opened a bar and restaurant named The Vine, offering an 'eno-dining'



experience. All details can be found on their website at: www.lindenhousestansted.co.uk.

Jancis Robinson MW, who has recently moved house and down-sized, has donated her archives of wine notes and writings, pre-going digital, to the library at the University of California at Davis (UCD). The archives include her tasting notes dating back to 1976, 275 notebooks, correspondence with colleagues such as Robert Parker, authors including Elizabeth David and Julian Barnes, and even with former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as well as many photographs. More details can be seen, including photographs on UCD's website at: <https://goo.gl/8O2wPm>.

On her site, Jancis writes: 'I feel both bemused and honoured that the paper records of my life's work in wine is thought worth shipping across the Atlantic to a part of the world that has been so important to me ever since I first visited California in 1969. In Davis's famed Shields Library, described by Hugh Johnson as "the greatest wine library in the world", my archive will join that of Hugh, Robert Mondavi, Maynard Amerine and Harold Olmo inter alia.' You can read Jancis' full story on her website at: <https://goo.gl/4x2j9J>.

Too late to be included in our photographic feature on the future of the wine, which begins on page 16, **Jim Budd** submitted the photo and caption below.



Matthieu Delaporte is an excellent young Sancerre producer of Domaine Vincent Delaporte in Chavignol. The picture was taken on Cul de Beaujeu above Chavignol. The Delaportes are the only estate on this steep vineyard to grow Pinot Noir.

Forthcoming Circle events

Visit to the Wine Society

Date: 17th February

Venue: The Wine Society, Stevenage, Hertfordshire.

The visit will begin with coffee at 10-10.30am and will conclude after lunch at around 2.30pm. Members can take the train from London's King's Cross station to Stevenage, from where transport to The Society's offices will be arranged. The visit will include a tasting of a selection of Wine Society wines including its Exhibition range and some made exclusively for The Society. A tour of the cellars and lunch will follow. An astonishing number of people in the wine trade are members of The Wine Society... The reasons for this are simple – the range is second to none and the pricing is extremely competitive. Please contact Andrea Warren as soon as possible if you would like to participate.

AWE tastings of Alto Adige and Napa Valley Open to Circle members

Date: 28th February

Venue: Polpo, London

An Alto Adige tasting in the morning will be followed by a Napa Valley tasting in the afternoon. Full details will follow from Andrea Warren.

Possible tasting at Vinexpo

Dates: 18th-21st June

Venue: Bordeaux

If you plan to attend Vinexpo this year and would be interested in attending a seminar and/or a social event, please let Andrea Warren know, stating which days you will be there. Once the committee has an idea of numbers and interest, they can then review what can be arranged.



Friends of the Circle

The Circle committee unveils the details of the new Friends of the Circle initiative and the benefits that this can offer.

Friends of the Circle

As members are aware, 2017 will see a number of changes for the Circle – a new logo, a new website, members' details going online and a new online newsletter.

In order for our friends in the trade to also benefit from these changes, we are launching the Friends of the Circle initiative. Once the new website is up and running in February, we will be sending out details and publicising to as wide a group as possible in the trade, to show what our members offer. In the meantime, for members and subscribers, the details are below and we look forward to welcoming old friends and new ones to join us.

All members of the trade and associated businesses can subscribe to become **Friends of the Circle**. This will offer better and further benefits to those wanting to communicate with our members, find out the latest Circle news and interact more closely with our members.

Who can be a Friend of the Circle? (This list is not exhaustive)

- » Wines and spirits trade companies – producers, agencies, importers, wholesalers, retailers
- » PR agencies
- » Generic PR agencies
- » Publishers
- » Sommeliers
- » Glass and accessory manufacturers/retailers
- » Wines and spirits exhibition organisers

There are two levels of subscriptions available and these will replace the current subscriptions to the Circle Membership List and/or *Circle Update*. If you are a current subscriber your subscription will continue until it is due to expire, at

which time we would invite you to become either a Friend of the Circle (£100 per annum) or a Corporate Friend of the Circle (£200 per annum).

There is a one-off joining fee of £20 but this will be waived for our existing subscribers.

The benefits offered for each level of subscription are listed below:

Friend of the Circle (£100 per annum)

- » Access to the online Circle newsletter (to replace Circle Update in 2017)
- » Invitations to attend Circle tastings and seminars (priority given to Circle members) – a small fee may be charged
- » Invitations to attend Circle social events (priority given to Circle members) – a fee for these events will be charged
- » Use of the Friends of the Circle logo on your correspondence to show your link with the Circle
- » Access to details of other 'Friends'

Corporate Friend of the Circle (£200 per annum)

- » As per Friend of the Circle above plus....
- » Online access to the Circle membership list to view as and when needed. In future, members will update this online with their latest details
- » Access to download the Circle membership list

For further information about becoming a Friend of the Circle please contact our administrator Andrea Warren: administrator@circleofwinewriters.org
Tel: +44 (0)1753 882320.



*Colleagues pay fond tributes to the former wine writer of The Lady and Honorary Life Member of the Circle, **Charlotte Lessing**, who has died, aged 92.*

RIP Charlotte Lessing

*Photo of Charlotte at a tasting by **Jim Budd**.*

Charlotte Lessing died on 16th November aged 92 and her funeral took place at Mortlake Crematorium, on the 30th November. She had been suffering from Alzheimer's and was cared for by her family.

Charlotte began her career communicating about food and wine in 1959. She was the editor of *Good Housekeeping* magazine from 1973-1986, the founding editor of *Country Living* magazine and she wrote a wine column for *The Lady* for many years until she retired in the late 2000s. She joined the Circle in 1991.

Charlotte won several awards including that of Editor of the Year in 1982 from the Periodical Publishers Association (now the Professional Publishers Association or PPA). Writing about the awards ceremony in 1983, *The Spectator* editor, Alexander Chancellor, who she pipped to the post, wrote: 'My benevolent employer, Mr Algy Cluff, had entered me for the Editor of the Year award presented by the Periodical Publishers' Association. I didn't actually win. This honour, and a cheque for £1,000, went to the editor of *Good Housekeeping*, Miss Charlotte Lessing... It would

have been nice to have beaten Miss Lessing as well, but one can't have everything, and the cheque for £500 was most welcome. Anyway, I couldn't really have beaten Miss Lessing; I don't have her style. While I was sitting there trembling in my borrowed dinner jacket, she contrived, like some seasoned Hollywood star, to be away in the south of France on her big night leaving behind a colleague to collect her cheque and mumble into the microphone something like, "I know that if Charlotte had been here, she would have wanted to say that none of this would have been possible without teamwork..." Charlotte was also awarded by the Wine Guild in 1995 and in 1996 received the accolade, Chevalière de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole, from the French.

Later in her life, Charlotte lived for seven years with Charles Whitfield MW, until his death in 1997. The following comes from a tribute to him on the Masters of Wine website: 'After the death of his wife, he [Charles] spent his remaining seven years with his partner, Charlotte Lessing. They had known each other since 1959 when she was doing PR in food and wine. He had told her many years before that they

would end their lives together. Charlotte was happy with this on condition that he promised her a good cellar. When the time came, rumour has it that he arrived without even one bottle! They spent much of their few years together travelling the world, and, in Charlotte's words, "he was busy and happy until the last moment".

Wink Lorch writes: 'In the 1990s I met Charlotte many times at Circle and other trade/press tastings, where she was always assiduously studious and also meticulously dressed (as per the photo of her on the left). I always enjoyed chatting with her – she was interested and encouraging in whatever project I was doing.

Charlotte told me she would love to visit the French Alps, and with her partner, Charles Whitfield MW, booked to come on a summer wine and walking holiday I was running. They were a little daunted by the walking aspect of it and I was a little daunted by having such a distinguished Master of Wine, along with Charlotte, tasting wine at the modest Savoyard vigneron we would be visiting, and participating in the tutored tastings and wine dinners I also included in the itinerary. By this time in her early 70s, Charlotte was very fit and as I recall practiced yoga regularly – she put the rest of the group and me to shame. Charles would do short versions of our walks. As for the wines, they both revelled in learning about wines new to them and could not have been more gracious. Most sadly, it turned out to be their last holiday together, because Charles died suddenly while Charlotte was away on a press trip later that year. She regularly reminded me how much they both loved that holiday and she treasured the memory. Sadly, I cannot find a photograph of the two of them in the Alps.'

Rosemary George MW writes: 'I first met Charlotte when she was editor of *Good Housekeeping* and I was still working in the wine trade, at Les Amis du Vin, and we were preparing a reader offer. Charlotte was already very enthusiastic about wine, and consequently when she retired from *Good Housekeeping*, she went on to write a regular wine column for *The Lady*. She was frequently to be seen at tastings,

even at the beginning of her ninth decade and I always admired her interest and enthusiasm. She was a shining example, demonstrating that it was perfectly possible to carry on enjoying your work, even in your 80s. And it is so sad that the onset of dementia brought her career to an end.

Charlotte was also a welcoming hostess and an entertaining guest. I remember her 80th birthday party, and a subsequent smaller dinner for her 81st birthday. And my husband remembers her laughing about an occasion on a press trip to the United States. Her travel schedule read 'Charlotte Lessing, journalist, The Lady'. When she arrived at the airport to check in, she was greeted with the words, "Lady Lessing, we are giving you an upgrade, so you will be travelling first class". Charlotte thought it churlish to disillusion them!

Jim Budd, who took the photo on the previous page, wrote that Charlotte was 'always professional, friendly and a true supporter of the Circle'.

Ex-CWW member **David Furer**, who lodged with Charlotte for some time, has written: 'Knowing her illuminated in me numerous details of daily life, stories she shared with me of her past created tableaux, from which I learned and grew. We often made each other laugh, made all the more delightful due to the clear differences between our lives. The mention of her name by or to a colleague was invariably accompanied by an upturned smile and an upbeat voice from us both; she was respected, liked, valued.'

While I'm pleased her life was long, my heart is nonetheless heavier knowing she is no longer. I miss my friend but will, as always, cherish my memories of her.'

Julie Arkell writes: 'Charlotte was editor of *Good Housekeeping* magazine during my undergraduate years way back in the 1970s... and little did I know then that she would become so influential in my choice of career.'

I cannot recall how I managed to achieve this on a lowly student grant (yes, a grant, not loan!), but every four weeks or so I would host a small supper party, the menu based

always on the current *Good Housekeeping* Dinner Party of the Month. The recipes taught me much about cooking and I learned a lot about wine along the way, too, because I followed slavishly the suggested wine accompaniment to the main course.

Perhaps it is important to emphasise that this was a time when most people of my age and background had not grown up in a wine-drinking culture. I knew nothing about wine and drank it rarely. To put this into context for younger readers, supermarkets were not as they are now... and certainly they did not sell wine!

So, I have always believed that it was Charlotte who launched me into the joyous adventure of a previously unknown vinous world. And I loved it! I looked forward to each month's recommendation because I knew it would take me far away from the hideous confines of British wine [ed. for clarification: 'British wine' is made from rehydrated and fermented, imported grape juice] of which my fellow students were so fond! Looking back, I think it revealed an innate, reasonably discerning wine palate and, a few years later, gave me the confidence to accept a job with a wine-importing company... from which I have never looked back.

So, to me, it was an incredible honour to meet Charlotte for the first time some 15 years later, when I joined the Circle in 1992. In her typically modest style, she refused to accept any credit for the fact that it was her magazine that set me firmly onto the path of a life in wine. But I have no doubt about that whatsoever.'

Andrea Warren writes: 'I have fond memories of Charlotte. She would always attend the Circle AGM and was fun to chat with over a glass of Champagne. I think Charlotte felt it was the most befitting way to end the meeting, with a glass of Champagne and chatting with her fellow members. A lovely lady.'

RIP Leo Zanelli

A member of the Circle for many years, Leo Zanelli died in hospital on 5th January 2016, aged 86. His funeral was on 27th January. Leo was a prolific journalist and writer, the author of more than 30 book titles about numerous different subjects, including *Home Winemaking from A to Z* and the *Beer and Wine Making Illustrated Dictionary*.

A wonderful article about Leo was published in 2015 by Pete Whyatt and has already been sent to members. It can be found on the Fitzrovia News website at: <https://goo.gl/4eB9O2>.

Andrea Warren writes: 'Leo resigned from the Circle at the end of 2008 suffering from lymphocytic leukaemia. He was a long-standing member and again always attended the Circle events, including the annual dinner – one note I have from him, which made me smile is "My requirements are food and drink." He was a gentle and kind man – but reading the attached [see link above] very active in many fields, especially as an author.'

Wink Lorch remembers chatting to him often at Circle tastings: 'He always had something very interesting to say. As one of the few "real" journalists among us, he would talk about writers' rights, the National Union of Journalists and more.'

Jim Budd wrote that he was: 'Very sorry to hear about Leo Zanelli – very professional, a great enthusiast and strong supporter of the Circle. However, I was unaware of his time as a racing cyclist and organising [what was] then illegal racing.'

We would like to thank ex-Circle member John Young for the photograph of Leo, as well as the link to the article.





CWW TASTING: Carolyn Bosworth-Davies revels in the 'soil to table' approach of the Haciendas Company and its Marqués de la Concordia Family of Wines at a tasting held on 10th November. Photos by Brett Jones.



Full Marqués

This Circle tasting, entitled Spanish Food & Wine Experience, was different from our usual tastings, but none the less enjoyable and informative.

Several members, including Angela Reddin, had travelled earlier in the year to the luxury hotel, Hacienda Zorita, just north of Salamanca, where the emphasis is on a food experience that focuses on produce from its own estate and the Duero region, along with the wines of the Marques de la Concordia Family of Wines. See the *Circle Update* special trip report published in August 2016.

Angela had called upon Charles Metcalfe to assist with the tasting, and while we tasted the wines, he provided vital details about the regulations of the Ribera del Duero and Rioja denominations, plus their changing styles.

We were invited to taste the wines first and then were given a selection of cheese, chorizo and oil to taste alongside the wines.

Wines from Zorita's own estate were the most interesting coming from a vineyard called Unamuno, in the heart of the Arribes del Duero at 750 metres above sea level, planted with Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Merlot.

The 100% varietal Syrah 2014 really stood out. Not a permitted variety in the DO Arribes del Duero, it is classified under the Castilla y Leon DO. It was fermented in stainless steel, followed by several months of barrique ageing. This wine oozed delicious black fruits, and was soft and supple on the palate with great texture and peppery notes.

Syrah is a large (75%) component of the Zorita Magister 2011, a powerfully concentrated wine with big fruit and tannins that were well balanced, beautifully poised and elegant.

All of the speciality blends were well made, rich and

delicious wines, though expensive at £40+. More modestly priced was the Zorita Tempranillo 2013 at £8.99, which was full of red fruit, spice and well-crafted oak. It represents very good value.

The portfolio of the Marqués de la Concordia Family of Wines includes Cavas from Mas Monistrol. We were shown both the Rosé and the Brut 2012, and they provided a refreshing conclusion to the tasting. The rosé in particular with 70% Pinot Noir and 30% Monastrell had a fine mousse, fresh strawberry fruit and a reviving, lifted finish.

Just as the wines impressed, the cheeses shone. All produced on the organic farm at Hacienda Zorita, we sampled four and they were delicious. One to pick out was a ewe's raw milk soft cheese made with vegetable rennet, like a Mont d'Or, but with so much more flavour and intensity, and I thought the Cava rosé went really well with this.

The Syrah-based wines coped well with the pressed goat's cheese with thyme, with the wine moderating the

tanginess of the cheese. Syrah is also used in the production of one of the cheeses, a pressed sheep's cheese aged in Syrah wine, which was soft and mellow, with a creamy, nutty note. It was really tasty with the Rioja Crianza from Marqués de la Concordia.

In truth I felt the cheese went well with most of the wines. The star for me however was the chorizo Iberico, which was very meaty and not at all fatty. It was gently spiced and went so well with Zorita's 100% Tempranillo Abascal, which was very savoury and had great acidity that cut through the intensity of the chorizo. A delicious combination.

All the wines, cheeses and chorizo are available online at www.the-haciendas.com. Click on the Warehouse page for more details.

Many thanks to The Haciendas Company for hosting this tasting and giving more members the opportunity to experience the 'soil to table' wines, cheeses and other produce.



The tasting cheese and chorizo Ibérico matched well with the line-up. Angela Reddin presented the tasting.



*Afshin Molavi,
manager of
Manousakis
Winery.*

Afshin Molavi of Manousakis Winery presented a fascinating range of wines to the Circle at the Naval Club. With a Persian father and Greek mother, Afshin was born and raised in Sweden and started his working life as a chef there. He later worked in Crete and now owns a restaurant and wine bar in Athens as well as running the newly formed Manousakis Winery. Below are my notes on the wines he presented with my scores out of 20 and 100. (Greek regional spellings are as per tasting sheets).

Sparkling

NV Domaine Karanikas Brut Speciale Xinomavro (Blanc de Noirs), Amyndeio, Macedonia.

Disgorged in August after two years on the lees. Fine pale colour, shows red fruits on the palate with a creamy, dry finish. A very attractive sparkling wine either as an aperitif or with food. 17.25/91.

Whites

2015 Manousakis-Nostos Winery Vatolakos, Vidiano, Chania, Crete.

CWW TASTING: Steven Spurrier gallivants around Greece at a special Circle tasting held in London on 1st November. Photos by **Jim Budd**.

Greek grapes shine bright

From the most southern winemaking region in Europe, vines planted in 2010, fermentation in oak, no filtering, no fining. Clear and clean mid-yellow colour, good broad flavours, nice open style. 16.5/88.

2015 Vasaltis Winery Assyrtiko, PDO Santorini, Cyclades Islands.

Pre-phylloxera vines owned by the Church. Very pale colour, lovely floral, light yellow fruits nose, light dry spice on the palate and fine, smooth and lifted finish. Like Chablis with added warmth, Santorini being the hottest wine region in Greece. 17.5/92.

2015 Domaine Sciavus Vino di Sasso Robola, PDO Robola of Cephalonia, Ionian Islands.

This is an 'orange' wine from limestone soil, aged on its lees. Quite full gold colour, yellow fruits and straw on the nose which is slightly oxidative but it really comes back on the palate with good, slightly honeyed flavours, low sulphur and low acidity. It will age rapidly. 17.25/91.

2015 Manousakis-Nostos Winery Vatolakos Roussanne, Chania, Crete.

Sandy and schistous soil at 600 metres. Fine mid-gold colour, slightly waxy nose, very rich and full, and almost sweet on the palate but the acidity dries it out a bit. 17.25/91.

2014 Retsina-Kechris Tear of the Pine Assyrtiko, ABT Thessaloniki, Makedonia.

Pale yellow, slightly 'piney' but also fresh pears on the nose, fresh, slightly green herb/pine flavours, a really interesting wine and the pine is aromatic and precise, not dominating. Note that pine resin is added to the wine to stop oxidation. 17.5/92.

Reds

2013 Domaine Mercouri Avgoustiatis, Ilia, Peloponissos.

Deep young red, warm spice and dry herbs on the nose (like Grenache), good grip and depth of flavour, vibrant texture and good acidity making it more Cabernet Franc than Grenache. Really clear and positive palate. 17.75/93.



The line-up of 16 wines from a range of wineries across Greece. Behind: Helena Nicklin and chairman, Colin Hampden-White.



From left: our scribe, Steven Spurrier; and in deep concentration, Helena Nicklin and Miyoko Stevenson.

2007 Domaine Kelesides Yeanakohori Vineyard Xinomavro, PDO Naoussa.

Deep red in the middle, mature rim, fine Nebbiolo-style nose, quite rich chocolatey flavours at the start but drying out on the finish. 16/86.

2013 Thymopoulos Vineyard 'Nature' Xinomavro, PDO Naoussa.

Mid red colour but cloudy and unfiltered, surprisingly sweet attack that tightens up to show green and over-extracted tannins, quite fresh but unbalanced. 16/86.

2014 Domaine Aivalis Le Sang de la Pierre Agiorgitiko, PDO Nemea.

Fine deep red with a violet rim, some oak on the nose and

good smooth flavours, a very elegant wine, slightly smoky/oaky and the tannins slow it up for the moment. 17/90.

2006 Manousakis-Nostos Winery The Blend Vatolakos, Chania, Crete.

A blend of 38% Syrah/37% Mourvedre/25% Grenache. Full red, mature rim, rather murky nose and the tannins and oak are too dry, the palate is drying out. 15.5/84.

2013 Manousakis-Nostos Winery Mourvèdre, Vatolakos, Chania, Crete.

Rich deep red colour, very good briary fruit and terrific depth and energy, quite spicy and will develop in a very interesting way. 17.5/92.

2014 Manousakis-Nostos Winery Grenache, Vatolakos, Chania, Crete.

Bright red, some maturity on the rim, good natural ripeness, alcohol is a bit high. 16.5/88.

Dessert Wines

2008 Domaine Diamantis Liastos Xinomavro/Moschomavro/Nigrikiotiko, PGI Siatista, Makedonia.

From sun-dried fruit, aged in *foudres* for five years. Red amber (colour of a 10-year-old tawny port), rich orange peel nose, really good, slightly oxidised yet still fresh palate, very well-expressed, like a light Vin Santo. 17.5/92.

2009 Efrosini Winery Aurero Liatiko, PDO Dafnes, Heraklion, Crete.

Dense brown colour, no red, tawny rim, lacking clarity, big and chocolatey fully sweet nose like a light Malaga, acidity lifts the palate, good natural wine, just a bit murky/thick. 16/86.

2009 Domaine Sigalas Apiliotis Madnilaria, Santorini, Cyclades.

Dense brick red, hugely rich nose, no real fruit to get to grips with, just a massive block of richness, yet behind this is natural acidity, but really too rich. 16.5/88.



Sue Tolson warms up for the CWW Christmas party with Washington wines. Photos by Liz Sagues.

Washington on the world stage

Before the Christmas party on 1st December, some members of the Circle participated in a seminar on Washington wines presented by Greg Harrington MS of Gramercy Cellars, shown in full flow on the left.

Greg first gave us some background on the region and its wines. Washington State is located on a high desert

plane, ranging from 300-1,900 feet, with relatively consistent soils throughout the region, which is rich in volcanic history. Columbia has a basalt foundation with loess top soil, brought by the Missoula floods. The soils are well-draining and there are no issues with rot or phylloxera; their key issue is rather frost and freeze, which occurs approximately every ten

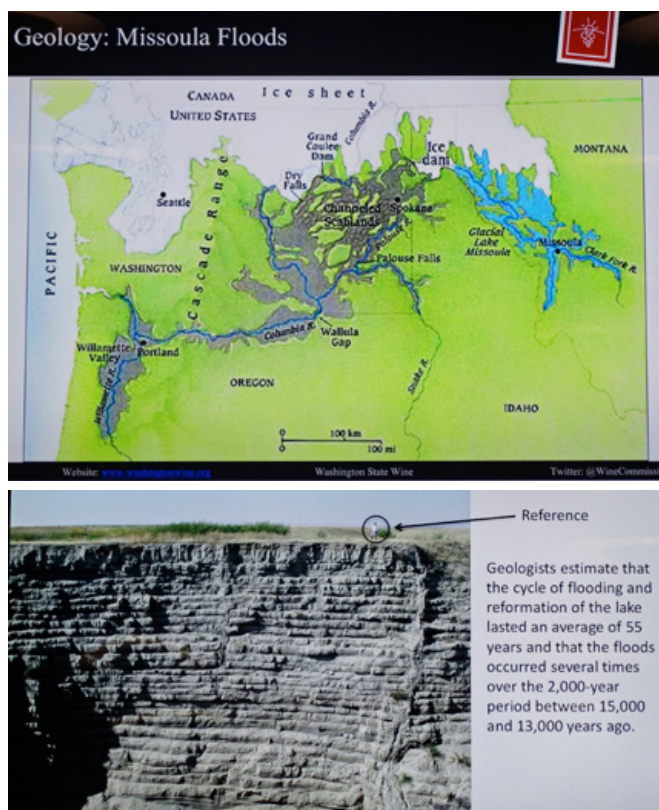
years, resulting in many vines being completely cut back. The Columbia Valley enjoys cooler nights and benefits from the rain shadow effect. Walla Walla receives an average of just seven inches of rainfall per annum, yet profits from long summer days with a good diurnal temperature range.

Washington is the second largest wine producing state in the US, with 720,000 hectares, 900 wineries and 350+ grape growers. It currently has 13 AVAs and two more may be added next year. Until this year, Riesling was the most grown variety. In fact, Chateau Ste. Michelle, Washington's biggest winery, is the largest producer of Riesling in the world, producing one million cases of just one particular wine! However, Cabernet Sauvignon is now king and Syrah is becoming more popular, along with demand for Mourvèdre and Viognier.

In the past, Syrah was often vertically terraced, resulting in overripe and sunburnt fruit, whereas it is now more jungle-like and unkempt to help keep the fruit shaded. The most exciting Syrah is now being made in cement, which the producers claim adds minerality. Stem retention is common too, as is co-fermenting. Cabernet Sauvignon has been grown in Washington since the 1950s, but high-end winemaking only began in the 1970s. Washington had previously been all wheat and apples.



Jancis Robinson MW was one of the writers bringing herself up to date with Washington State wines.



The impact of the Missoula floods were graphically illustrated during the presentation.

A tasting with a twist

The tasting comprised two blind flights of seven wines: a Syrah flight followed by a Cabernet Sauvignon one. The twist was that although we knew the identity of the first wine, from Washington in each case, the rest of the flight was blind, moreover the wines did not all originate from Washington. We had to identify whether the wines were New World or Old World. In the case of the Syrah flight, the Washington candidates were mixed with two wines from the Rhône, one from Cornas and one from Côte Rôtie, and one from Hawkes Bay in New Zealand. It was relatively easy to identify the New World wines as they exhibited relatively high alcohol and some sweetness on the finish, whereas the Old World wines often had a slightly sour note.

My three top Washington wines from the flight were as follows. Two Vintners Some Days are Diamonds Syrah 2013 (Horse Heaven Hills AVA) displayed attractive, concentrated black fruit, herbs and peppery spice, with good acidity and reasonable length. Long Shadows Sequel Syrah 2013 (Columbia Valley AVA), also containing 9% Cabernet Sauvignon, was a good example of a wine from central Washington, well-structured, with intense black bramble fruit, but also some red fruit, a cool herbal note and pepper. Horsepower Vineyards, The Tribe Syrah 2012 (Walla Walla AVA) was intense and black with plenty of oak, rather restrained and sweet on the nose, and more dominated by tertiary aromas of dried leaves, earth and smoked meat.

The second flight was a mix of Cabernet Sauvignon blends from Washington with Australia represented by Penfolds Bin 407, and Bordeaux represented by Château Pontet-Canet from Pauillac and Château Rauzan-Ségla from Margaux. Of course, the Bordeaux wines were Cabernet Sauvignon-based blends. Again, the New World wines exhibited a riper fruit quality and higher alcohol. The first Washington wine, Chateau Ste. Michelle Col Solare 2012 from the Red Mountain AVA, dubbed the Napa Valley of Washington due to its warm climate, was an intense concoction of black cherry and cassis with a touch of green pepper, chocolate and toast. It was sweet and ripe with velvety tannins. Andrew Will Sorella 2012 (Horse Heaven Hills AVA) was 67% Cabernet, bulked out with Merlot and Cabernet Franc, as Cabernet Sauvignon can be quite green in this area. Nevertheless, it was a pleasing ripe wine with intense black fruit, chocolate, liquorice, some meaty notes, pencil shavings, grippy tannins, bright acidity and a long finish. Betz Family Winery Père de Famille 2013 (Columbia Valley AVA) offered smoky, toasty red and black fruit and fine tannins, whereas Leonetti Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 (Walla Walla Valley AVA) was intensely black with rather jammy black cherry, liquorice and tar, and a lingering sweetness on the finish.

Overall, the Washington wines showed well, but tended to be somewhat over-oaked for my taste and rather alcohol dominated.



A few words about our annual party by **Wink Lorch**, aided by our administrator, **Andrea Warren**, with photographs by **Brett Jones (BJ)** and **Liz Sagues (LS)**. The party was held on 1st December.

Circle of Wine Writers Christmas party 2016

the aptly named Grand Hall, where our Christmas party was held, hosted by the Washington State Wine Commission.

Members were permitted early entry to the hall to taste a selection of 28 Washington wines, arranged by grape variety and their blends. Wines for drinking at the party were supplied by Château Ste. Michelle, Milbrandt Vineyards, Charles Smith Wines and Hedges Family Wines and the mood of the evening was very casual – a great chance to

chat and catch up with colleagues. The 140 people attending – Circle members and their guests – were welcomed by Doug Marshall, marketing manager for the Washington State Wine Commission. On behalf of the Circle, president Rosemary George MW thanked Doug and his colleague, communications director Heather Bradshaw, who was also present, as well as the president of the Washington State Commission, Steve Warner, who was unable to be there.

*Above: Circle administrator Andrea Warren and honorary secretary Vivienne Franks at the reception.
Below: Doug Marshall, marketing manager for Washington State had done his job! Photos by BJ.*

One Great George Street, Westminster, London, is a fine address to go to for any event, but especially for a Christmas party. The entrance hall of the Grade II Listed Building, home to the Institute of Civil Engineers, as well as being an events venue, was decked out for the season, including a splendid Christmas tree. It provided fine anticipation for the walk up the classically broad staircase to



Decorations created a festive mood. On left: Kate Sweet of Hilltop Wines. Above: CWW committee member, Keith Grainger. Photos by LS.

Text and photographs continue overleaf.



From monies raised from tickets to the party together with one generous donation, Rosemary presented a cheque on behalf of the Circle for £500 to David Cox, chief executive of The Benevolent, which was the Washington State Wine Commission's chosen charity for the evening. In accepting and thanking the Circle for the cheque, David reminded everyone of The Benevolent's first online silent auction, named Thanks for Giving, which had begun on Thanksgiving Day and was finishing at midnight and to which several CWW members and guests had contributed prizes and/or bid on them. The auction ended up raising £37,700 for The Benevolent.

Finally, thanks are due in particular to Kate Sweet of Hilltop Wines, who represents the Washington Wine Commission in the UK, and to CWW committee member Steven Morris, who was not able to be at the party, but who helped with initial organisation for the party, along with Andrea Warren.

Above: Circle president, Rosemary George MW with a happy David Cox, after he had received the Circle's cheque for The Benevolent. Photo by BJ.

Circle members and guests with a dominant black, white, navy and red theme, clockwise from right: Julia Harding MW with Carla Capalbo; ex-CWW member Julian Curry with Cherry Jenkins and Hamish Marett-Crosby; Alice Woolledge Salmon, widow of Hugo Dunn-Meynell; Christine Austin with Lindsay Oram; Julian Jeffs QC; Chris Skyrme of Sopexa with Kathryn McWhirter and Charles Metcalfe. All photos by BJ.



Above: Circle Update editor Wink Lorch, bemused by it all, with Circle chairman Colin Hampden-White. Photo by LS.





On the covers of this issue and over the next four pages, nine CWW members who work either full-time or part-time as professional photographers share pictures that focus on the future of the wine world. These members have been featured photographers in Update over the past few years.

A view of wine's future in pictures

Anti-clockwise from top left:

Matt Wilson's studio photo of his wife Andrea León, who is communications manager and winemaker for Casa Lapostolle in Chile, was inspired by one of Matt's favourite photographers, Irving Penn. 'I shot through a bottle of wine, with all labels cleaned off. I deliberately threw Andrea out of focus as it looked better in my opinion,' writes Matt.

Claes Lofgren shot this at the Great Wall of China some years ago. He writes: 'China has emerged as one of the world's largest grape growers and is now the world's sixth most important producer of wine with some 560,000ha under vine. During my visit I realised that they have quite some way to go in terms of quality, but improvements have been reported.'

Tim Atkin writes: 'This was taken at the Dávalos winery in Salta, now the second highest winery in the world. The place is so isolated that it's a long way to the nearest town to buy food. So this is the supermarket. Altitude is an important part of the struggle against climate change.'



Right: Leyre Oliván foot treading white grapes by **Tim Atkin**, who writes: 'Leyre is the wife of Roberto Oliván, one of the most exciting talents in Rioja, part of the new wave that focuses on vineyards rather than time in oak. Tentenublo is a quintessential family winery. They were all helping out when I visited last year, even his young daughter Anglea, who is just out of shot.' Far right: Amphorae at COS in Sicily. **Per Karlsson** writes: 'It is doubtful if amphorae are the future of wine but it has certainly become difficult to visit a wine region without seeing a few wineries experimenting with them.'



Above left: **Claes Lofgren**'s picture is of John Wurdeman of Pheasant's Tears in Georgia. 'When Georgia lost its dominant customer Russia, the winemakers had to adapt to a more western taste for their wines. The old tradition of fermenting in qvevri has become a part of the chic natural wine movement. John is one of the leading ambassadors.'

Above right: Dominique Lucas of Les Vignes de Paradis in Crépy, Haute Savoie, experiments with a range of containers including concrete eggs, demi-muid barrels, clay amphorae and an especially-designed pyramid-shape concrete tank inspired by the Egyptian Cheops pyramid. Photo taken by **Mick Rock** on a Savoie shoot with Wink Lorch.

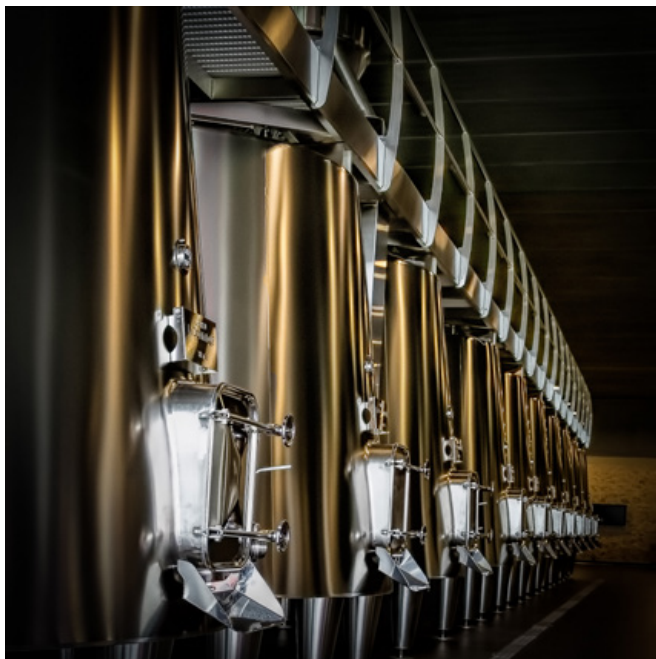
Anti-clockwise from bottom left: Photo of Jane Eyre by **Jon Wyand**, who writes: 'Jane Eyre may look too young, slim and feminine to be a winemaker but perhaps being an Aussie is a big factor in her strength. She is one of Lafon and Meurgey's young micro-négociants, renting space at Château de Bligny. But off season you'll find her in the Mornington Peninsula making wine in Australia. As if Burgundy was not enough...'

Steven Morris took this photo of the Australian winemaker Iwo Jakimowicz of Si Vintners with his young baby. He writes: 'Si uses natural methods and minimal intervention in the traditionally conservative Margaret River region. This portrait was commissioned by Wine Australia whilst Iwo was in London for the Artisan tasting in hipster Shoreditch last September. My brief was to go for a natural look without flash.'

The winemaker and owner of Saxum, one of the most-awarded wineries in Paso Robles, California, the smiling Justin Smith was photographed in his cellar by **Bob Holmes**.

Burgundy's Benjamin Leroux and his son are photographed by **Jon Wyand**, who writes: 'Benjamin made his name at Domaine Comte Armand in Pommard but he has been refining his profile for the last nine years as he builds up his domaine and négociant business. Allen Meadows, The Wine Advocate and many others hold this serious, slightly reserved young man in high regard.'





Left: Wine tanks at Château Dominique, Bordeaux, by **Andrew Barrow**. 'While I think this looks futuristic as a simple photo, the juxtaposition between these state of the art installations and the historic houses that sit nearby shows the contrast between the all-important historic elements and planning for the future.'

Right: **Per Karlsson** writes about these Japanese mini-figurines, which adorn a glass at Champagne Paul Déthune: 'New markets, not least in Asia, develop. Our traditional European wine culture may not apply there. Hard to imagine a bikini Champagne girl in, for example, Scandinavia. Below left: Steffan Jorgensen is a Danish winemaker, who has been based in Chile for a number of years and is the co-owner and winemaker at Elqui Wines in the Elqui Valley. **Matt Wilson** took this shot while Steffan was tasting grapes pre-harvest in his best Carmenère vineyard.

Below right: **Steven Morris** writes: 'Drone photography is a perfect way to capture a vineyard. The maximum height we are allowed to fly in the UK is 120m, this image was taken from 100m, so I could get the whole site into one image. Windsor Great Park is the latest in the Laithwaite's family collection of English vineyards, used for sparkling wine production.'





Amanda developed an early taste for travel, taking her first flight aged seven weeks.

Meet the member: Wink Lorch meets two British members, who are based outside the UK – **Amanda Barnes** lives in Argentina, though she is rarely at home, and Circle Update's deputy editor **Robert Smyth** is based at the geographic centre of Europe in Budapest. These interviews were conducted by email. Photographs were supplied by the interviewees.

Amanda Barnes: 'Local producers continue to teach and inspire me today.'

Amanda is a British journalist and editor who has specialised in writing on wine and travel for over a decade. Since 2009 she has lived between Mendoza in Argentina and Santiago in Chile and the wines of South America have become a particular focus.

Following her BA degree in comparative literature at London's King's College, while working in journalism, Amanda studied to become a fully-fledged journalist in 2009 through distance learning with the British Council for the Training of Journalists. A desire to travel led her to up sticks and later to wine writing and she ended up living in Mendoza. She has written widely for wine publications including *Decanter* and *The Drinks Business*, and contributed to books by Oz Clarke and Hugh Johnson, as well as to *Fodor's Travel Guides* and *Descorchados*.

Amanda's online projects include *The Squeeze*, a digital magazine with a focus on the South American wine scene, and her project *Around the World in 80 Harvests*. A post that Amanda wrote for this project recently earned her the prize for Best Tourism Content with a Focus on Wine in the Born Digital Wine Awards 2016 edition, adding to a string of awards and scholarships she has received for her writing. She has been a member of the Circle since 2012, the year in which she was short-listed for the second time for Best Young Wine Writer.

Did your family drink wine when you were growing up and were you encouraged to join in?

Absolutely. There was never a meal without wine growing up. I didn't start drinking wine until I was 14 or 15 years old though, which coincides more closely with my food tastes maturing than the law!

My parents definitely made me appreciate wine as an element of the meal, and family holidays in Europe also taught me it was part of a cultural cuisine. Wine has been an integral part of my taste expeditions ever since.

Based on your experience, would you encourage aspiring young wine or travel writers to take formal qualifications in journalism?

Yes. I struggled through mine, so everyone else should too!

Joking aside, formal qualifications help you build your professional confidence and competence. They don't spell success though, you need to be prepared to put in the leg work and build your portfolio. Where I believe journalism qualifications are really important is for grasping libel law and giving you a sense of responsibility to your reader. I am concerned at the general lack of respect for the truth in

some communication today, most especially by President Trump...

How did you end up living in Mendoza, or is it Santiago?

Because of wine! After years working in local newspapers in England, I decided I wanted to try writing freelance for a year and focus on two of my great passions: travel and food. I didn't think I could write seriously about food without

Overlooking vineyards in Chile's Cachapoal Valley.



understanding wine better. So, I decided to move to a wine-producing region to learn.

I had fallen in love with South America from afar, through the words of Borges, García Márquez and other great South American writers. I had never been, so I bought a ticket and headed for Argentina in 2009.

And I haven't looked back since! I split my time between Mendoza and Chile. It generally makes more sense for me to rent in Mendoza, where I have 80% of Argentina's wine producers at my doorstep, and travel when I am in Chile because the wine regions are so spread apart. Although I've rented a second apartment in Santiago at times too.

The reason I stayed is because I love being at the heart of South American wine. It's so dynamic.

And what inspired you to start writing about wine?

I started learning about wine to join the dots... but I discovered that it was the nucleus. Wine encompasses

Behind the scenes for 80 harvests, Amanda inspects a soil pit with Sebastián Zuccardi in Altamira in the Uco Valley.



everything I love: travel, gastronomy, people, nature. I am inspired by the experience of discovering wine and the passion of producers.

Who were your early mentors in the wine world in Argentina and Chile?

Winemakers and agronomists. There are far too many to mention! But since day one, local producers have been generous with their time and knowledge and they continue to teach and inspire me today. It has been the best wine education I could ask for.

I admire anyone that can dedicate their life to something so vulnerable as nature and ultimately [as] focused on the enjoyment of others.

Tell us more about your project Around the World in 80 Harvests.

80 Harvests is a global journey visiting 80 wine regions around the world to discover what makes each place unique. In each region I'm meeting with wine producers to share the story of their terroir through text, photography and video. It's a modern-day wine adventure, covering both the well-known wine regions and those that are off-the-beaten path.

In 2016 I covered North America and South America, and in 2017 and 2018 I'll be in Europe, Africa, Asia and Australasia. It's a logistical nightmare (for everyone!) because I aim to arrive during the harvest. The reason being, harvest is when the year's expectations are becoming a reality and there is no smokescreen. It's raw and real emotion, and really wonderful to witness.

I've had really amazing feedback and participation so far. The producers I've visited have been completely on board with the project and enthusiastic to be part of something on this global scale.

Is online publishing the only future for wine and travel writing or do you think print will still have an important part to play? Long live print! Personally I hope it never completely disappears, I love it. There is nothing more appealing to

me than the musty smell of an old book shop, or opening a Sunday newspaper.

However, I'm not going to lie, I'm used to having most things online now and print sometimes feels inconvenient. Lugging large wine books around the globe gives you serious backache! Also the opportunities in digital media are so vast and exciting.

I think it is a generation game. And unfortunately I don't think the future generation will be as nostalgic about print as we are.

When you're at home relaxing from your travels, what do you reach for?

G&T. Sparkling Wine. Whisky. In that order. For dinner I am unashamedly capricious. I love variety in wine, although a general rule of thumb for me is 'big whites, feminine reds'.

What's the most exciting wine you have drunk recently and why?

I'm a sucker for old vintages, it really appeals to my inner time traveller. Some of the older vintages of Pinot Noir in Oregon were definitely a highlight on my 80 Harvests North America tour.

What do you enjoy doing most when you take a break from wine, travel and work?

The great thing about being freelance is I love what I do, the bad thing is that you never really switch off. So 'taking a break' doesn't happen very often! I love to cook, so I guess that's where I switch off and relax. With a glass of wine in hand, of course.



Meet the CWW Member 2:



Intrepid traveller Robert on the Israel-Egypt border.

Deputy editor of *Circle Update* since January 2016, Robert is a British journalist, editor and wine writer who has been based in Budapest, Hungary, for many years. As well as being a specialist writer on the wines of Hungary and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, he is head of the journalism department of McDaniel College in Budapest.

One of Robert's early projects in the world of wine was to edit fellow CWW member David Copp's book, *Hungary: Its Fine Wines and Winemakers*, published in 2006. In 2015 his own book, *Hungarian Wine, A Tasting Trip to the New Old World* was published by Blue Guides and was winner of an OIV Award in 2016.

Robert juggles his college teaching commitments with wine judging, wine translations from Hungarian to English and presenting wine tastings. He also contributes regular wine columns to *The Budapest Business Journal*, *Wine Connoisseur* and *Winesofa.eu*, as well as writing for various

Robert Smyth: 'I learnt the trade completely on the job.'

wine guides and books. All of this involves regular travel to wine regions within Hungary and further afield.

Was wine on the table when you were growing up in England? When did you start to develop a real love of wine? Wine was on the table every Sunday, as I recall, but it was nothing fancy. When I think back, I can picture bottles of Blue Nun, Black Tower, cartons of Stowells for the holidays, and some decent French reds. As Sunday lunch came hot on the heels of Saturday night, I didn't exactly lap it up anyway. My father made some homebrew beer and 'wine' from whatever he could get his hands on. I dabbled with those homebrew kits from Boots to which you simply add sugar and yeast, and leave it in the demijohn and Bob's your Uncle. One rosé I made tasted of strawberry juice but importantly had alcohol in it, and it wowed fellow students of a German night-school class I was attending, at the end of term party. However, I'm sure we had pretty unsophisticated palates back then and I'm sure I'd find it repulsive now.

I started to enjoy the taste of red wine on a school trip to Paris while in sixth form but I was more of a beer drinker until being wowed on my first trip to Tokaj in 1993, just when things were starting to take off there, four years after the end of communism, where we had Aszú that dated back to 1956 – the year of the Hungarian Revolution. Soon after that I ended up in Spain, where I really started enjoying soft, fruity and sometimes spicy reds. I lived right next to the Campo de Borja region in Aragon, where Moncayo's lower slopes are planted with old vine Garnacha. The region has evolved remarkably in the last 20 years. I was also very close to Navarra and not far from Rioja.

Did you always plan to be a journalist or did this aim emerge later?

I had absolutely no plan to become a journalist and I wonder how many people who become journalists actually study journalism at degree level. It was while doing a Masters in Business Administration when they asked me if I could write a few words about a recent trip to Cuba, when Fidel Castro still ruled the roost, for the Uni rag. I really struggled to get the first words out but after a while it flowed and my first article was entitled 'Communism in the Sun'. While looking for a job in business, a vacancy appeared at a business paper – *The Budapest Business Journal* (BBJ). I covered IT and Telecommunications but when they needed someone to write a supplement on Hungarian wine, I jumped at the chance. I'd written my Master's thesis on Hungarian wine marketing in the UK, or lack of it! I found this project a lot more exciting and gradually transitioned over to wine writing.

I learnt the trade completely on the job. I still write a wine column for the BBJ, which now comes out every two weeks. Despite the limited page space, it's good to see that due to



Over a decade ago in Budapest, Robert revealed a competitive streak – with snooker, anyway.

the surging interest [in Hungary] in wine from locals, expats and visitors alike, that the editor wants a wine column in every issue.

What brought you to Budapest, so soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall?

When I graduated with a degree in economics in 1992 it was right after the Thatcher/Lawson bubble burst and jobs were suddenly extremely difficult to come by for fresh graduates and I also wanted to travel a bit. I decided to teach English as a Foreign Language, combining travel with getting some work experience. A student exchange as part of the newly titled course 'Economics of East European countries in transition' had already taken me on a study exchange to the Warsaw School of Economics. I was fascinated by the country and managed to land a teaching job in the city of Poznan, which I'd already visited. I learnt Polish for a few weeks, only to be told that the job had fallen through, but they asked if I'd go to Budapest instead. Having seen how beautiful the city was while interrailing in 1992, it was a no-brainer.

Who were your early mentors in the wine world?

Shortly after writing the aforementioned wine supplement, I was introduced to David Copp by a mutual friend and I learnt a lot from him, particularly about classic European wines. Darrel Joseph also inspired me with a comparative tasting of Austrian and Hungarian wines. It was great to interview Hugh Johnson for a business story about Royal Tokaji, and his and Jancis Robinson MW's *Wine Atlas* became regular bedtime reading, as did Oz Clarke's *Wine Atlas* – both of which were delightfully written in quite different styles, with the latter having excellent maps as well that could almost drop you in the regions. It was a great experience to judge and talk with Liz Gabay MW fairly early on.

Earlier, I recall it was while watching Jancis on the BBC while I was supposed to be swotting up for a painfully dreary finance exam when she was exploring the difference between Burgundian and New World Chardonnay, that I knew I wanted to be involved in wine. Also, I was a big fan

of Keith Floyd's cooking programmes and I loved it when he was joined by Jonathan Pedley MW for a series.

What do you enjoy about editing wine books and articles?

The chance to travel the wine world without leaving your desk – not that I don't like travelling. It also enables you to really get into the subject and help the authors better express themselves when necessary.

What Hungarian wine region is exciting you right now?

There's been a general improvement across the board in recent years as winemakers work out how to get the most out of their given terroirs and indigenous grapes. Szekszárd (which I wrote about in *Update* October 2016) has been particularly impressive lately for developing a clear message based on Kadarka, Kékfrankos and Bikavér, and the wines have come on leaps and bounds.

Is there another under-the-radar central or eastern European wine country we should watch out for?

There's such a lot going on I really wouldn't single one out as there are so many exciting and distinctive nooks and crannies to explore. On a recent trip to Bulgaria, I was impressed by some of wines made from local grapes but they remain firmly in the shadow of the international varieties.

How has the Budapest wine scene changed in the past five years?

It's changed beyond recognition. Just a decade ago you could hardly find a genuine wine bar but now they're shooting up like mushrooms and there's also a lot of interest in wine education.

What Hungarian wines do you reach for most often when you're at home?

I really try to sample as broad a range as I can but the whites tend to be much more consistent than the reds. While there's so much hype around dry Furmint, I think Hárslevelű – which is often considered as Furmint's ugly

sister when it comes to dry wine – can sometimes make wines of greater overall roundness. There are some great results from blending the two together in dry wine and why not since they work in such fabulous tandem in Tokaji Aszú. Olaszrizling, especially from the volcanic and mixed soils on the northern side of Lake Balaton, can be exciting and good value.

And a Hungarian producer who's breaking the mould?

There's no shortage of innovative producers here, all they need is a tad more consistency, so pass.

Which wine region in the world that you haven't visited yet would you most like to visit and why?

Gimblett Gravels [in New Zealand] – not only because of the funky name but also because I recently had a distinctively vibrant red blend from there.

What do you do to relax in Budapest?

Run around Margaret Island (Margitsziget) and then reward myself with one or two of a growing number of tasty local craft beers in one of the buzzing District VII's bars – to refresh my palate and take a break from the wine.





After a break of eight years, **Stephen Brook** relishes going back to the Duero though finds a mixed picture. Photos are copyright José I Berdon, courtesy of CRDO Ribera del Duero.

Return to Ribera

It had been eight years since my last visit to Ribera del Duero, so an opportunity to return was hard to resist. Its wine had been wildly popular, or at least well regarded, about 15 years ago, yet it seems to have fallen under a shadow. Even though it boasted such prestigious names as Vega Sicilia and Pingus, it fell off the radar, at least in Britain.

The trip began with a tasting at the Consejo of 25 wines in all styles, from vintages back to 2010. It soon became apparent that there was little stylistic cohesion here, which is not surprising given the vast size of the appellation. About half the wines adhered to the traditional categories of Crianza and Reserva; the rest opted for the meaningless Cosecha badge, which allowed each winery to fashion the wine as it saw fit. Nothing wrong with that, but unless there was a helpful back label it was sometimes unclear

what the consumer would find in the bottle. Most of the wines were distinctly oaky, and they were also bold, lush and tannic, with marked variations between vintages. Many lacked freshness but others were splendid. There was also a profusion of new labels. About half of the wines were from bodegas I had never encountered before, though some of them turned out to be 'icon' bottlings from established bodegas promoting the wine as a new brand rather than as a new product from the winery.

We dined in Aranda del Duero at the splendid El Lagar de Isilla wine bar and restaurant. The owners also produce their own wine, which was an opportunity to taste the region's sole white variety, Albillo. It proved to be neutral and somewhat grapefruity, so it was a relief to return to the robust reds.

The next morning we visited Pesquera, one of four wineries owned by Alejandro Fernandez, who became an overnight sensation when in the late 1980s, I believe, Robert Parker dubbed his wine the Petrus of Ribera del Duero. I visited here in 1989 and found the owner more interested in showing photographs of his good self alongside celebrities, such as crooner Julio Iglesias and President Mitterrand of France, than in explaining his wines. Fernandez, now 84, was absent, but his daughter presided over the tasting, which

showed that the wines, always solid and well made, hadn't changed much over the decades.

Dependence on Tempranillo a blessing or a curse?

From Pesquera there was a drive into the hills to visit Aalto. Javier Zaccagnini, who founded the winery together with the former winemaker of Vega Sicilia, Mariano Garcia, explained the difficulty of establishing an identity for Ribera del Duero. "We're working with one variety, Tempranillo. Rioja has Tempranillo too, but also other varieties such as Garnacha and Graciano. The appellation rules allow us to plant and use some French varieties, but that's because they had long been in the Vega Sicilia vineyards," explained

Javier. He added that the truth is that it is almost impossible to ripen Cabernet Sauvignon here, except in very warm vintages and specific locations. "So at Aalto we focus on individual villages and different biotypes of Tempranillo grown on very different soils. It can vary greatly from village to village, although all these biotypes have the same DNA. But by harvesting numerous blocks from different villages and vinifying them separately, Mariano has the building blocks he needs to produce a blend



that's balanced and complex. Power and tannins are easy here. What's harder is to have finesse. But that's what we're aiming for," said Javier.

We lunched in Quintenilla de Oresino at Fuente de la Aceña, downing an excellent garlic soup and slow-roasted lamb. On the other side of the room, Peter Sisseck was celebrating the end of the harvest with his employees. I checked out the wines he was offering them, and found bottles of the moderately priced but very good Psi. There were bottles of Flor de Pingus and at least one magnum of Pingus. So he was treating them to the good stuff, too. After lunch we visited the small family estate of Alonso del Yerro. In the cellar I sampled young wines from different soil types, which were indeed as different in flavour and structure as they had been when I performed a similar exercise at Aalto earlier in the day.

The evening was spent at the O. Fournier winery, one of three of that name owned by the indefatigable José Manuel Ortega – the two others being in Argentina and Chile. This means he spends most of his life on airplanes, so he wasn't there to receive us, but instead we were hosted by his sister Natalia. By the headlights of her jeep we toured the vineyards, noting the bush vines on gravelly soils near the river, as well as younger plantings that had been trellised. Some parcels of old bush vines were experiencing high mortality rates, so trenches had been dug at another site on the property so that the surviving vines could be moved to a new home. Natalia said that about 90% of the transplanted vines had made the transition safely. She took us to dinner in Aranda at the Raspa restaurant, where we consumed warm foie gras, octopus salad, poached egg sprinkled with fresh black ruffles, and then a vast platter of rice with venison and wild mushrooms. All these dishes were washed down with the powerful O. Fournier wines.

The final visit, the next morning, to Cordoniu-owned Legaris, got off to a slow start, as everyone was numbed by Mr Trump's election to the American presidency. The winemaker, Jorge Bombin, proved informative, intelligent, and helpful, even if the wines were sound rather than thrilling, with the exception of the limited released called

Carmo, which blends wines from vines grown at 950 metres with press wine from some of their top sites. Aged in new barriques, the 2009 had lift and freshness despite the abundance of new oak.

Seeking freshness in Ribera del burn

The abiding impression of this admittedly rapid tour was of the profusion of massive and alcoholic wines. Global warming seems to have had an impact here, as elsewhere in Europe. Hot, dry summers have been the rule rather than the exception, and even though winemakers professed a wish to make wines with no more than 14% alcohol, they have been finding that it's been getting ever more difficult, at least in a good vintage, to end up with wines under 14.5%. Indeed, quite a few were 15.5% or more. For me that is not a problem so long as the wines are balanced, but all too often the alcoholic burn stuck out like a sore thumb on the finish, severely reducing the drinkability of the wine. The winemakers are conscious of this, but find themselves helpless in the face of a very hot climate.

Jorge Bombin of Legaris admitted: "We have vines that easily get high sugars. Some growers are tempted to pick them when they hit 14%. The problem is that phenolic ripeness lags two to three weeks behind sugar ripeness.



Left: Jorge Bombin of Legaris.

Below: Stephen Brook looks for answers.



Pick on sugars alone, and you're likely to end up with hard or green tannins. So it's better to wait. But then you have ripe seeds and skins, but you also have potential alcohols of 15% and high pH. And that results in heavy, fatiguing wines."

The best estates search for freshness. At Alonso del Yerro, which is advised by Stéphane Derenoncourt, the team has isolated two parcels that are on soils with a significant proportion of limestone, which is not that common here. This does give the wine, a limited offering called Maria, a burst of freshness, even though the alcohol can be high. Many other properties, to my astonishment, routinely add tannins to the must. In lighter, cooler years, such as 2013, there can be an argument for doing so, but it's hard to understand the rationale for routine tannin addition. Acidification is routine, and, as in the hotter corners of Australia, one can see why. Even with acid addition far too many wines seem overripe and flabby.

At their best the wines have a grandeur and generosity of fruit that are truly impressive. But this doesn't seem to be a style still likely to find favour with British wine drinkers. We have never been keen on the big oaky Barossa monsters that were championed by Robert Parker, and some of the Ribera del Duero wines fall into the same category. It is clearly a struggle for winemakers to produce balanced wines; they acknowledge that the wines in ripe years can be too burly, while insisting that early-picked wines or wines from cool vintages such as 2013 can be pinched and

astringent. It's a dilemma, having your heart in one place, and your fruit source heading rapidly to another. I'm not convinced that the Ribera soils and climate are generally suited to the production of great wines, while the soils and elevations of Priorat, on which different grape varieties are grown, do seem to give more harmonious, subtle wines despite their power and weight.

In Oregon, **Wink Lorch** learns that the vineyard has become the big star, with sustainability and a natural approach also vying for a podium place. Photos by Wink.

Oregon, a quarter century on, part 2

When I first visited the Willamette Valley back in 1990, it was still considered a vinous backwater, even though Domaine Drouhin had already set up camp, convinced that this was the New World home for Pinot Noir. Drouhin had taken the precaution of planting its new vineyards with grafted vines, but in 1990 for most Oregon growers phylloxera was still considered a distant threat, way down in California, and land was cheap. Scott Henry training, invented in Oregon, was a novelty; coca-cola steel barrels were still in evidence for winemaking; and the concepts of sustainability or urban wineries were yet to be explored. Oregon was deemed a wine area for hippy types – in some ways it still is, even with a new generation at the forefront.

Along with Eyrie, which I wrote about in the October 2016 issue of *Update*, I visited Adelsheim, Ponzi, Knudsen Erath, Sokol Blosser, Rex Hill, Lange and Domaine Drouhin in 1990. In their different ways, they were all pioneering

Oregon family wineries and most survive and thrive today, albeit Knudsen has been reinvented and Rex Hill is owned by A to Z Wineworks, one of whose owners is Bill Hatcher, the original Oregon manager of Domaine Drouhin. Family wineries were and continue to be a cornerstone for wine in Oregon. On my visit last August, I chose to return to Adelsheim, as David Adelsheim had originally given me an excellent introduction to the region. In addition, I explored a short list of contrasting wineries.

Pinot peril

Never one to hold back, David Adelsheim described the focus on Pinot Noir in Oregon today as “ridiculous”, citing the only other major New World wine region with such varietal dominance as Marlborough with Sauvignon Blanc. For the record, Sauvignon accounts for over 75% of Marlborough plantings; in Oregon stats indicate Pinot Noir at 62% of planted acreage and 67% of production. These are obviously dangerously high figures should fashion change. Although its quality potential had been recognised by 1990, David said that no-one realised Pinot Noir’s real importance at the time, it was simply easier to sell to distributors than the white varieties prevalent then.

David explained that King

Estate first made Pinot Gris famous and it remains the second most important Oregon variety, but its growth has stalled due, David believes, to a glass ceiling on price. At Adelsheim they plan to wind down their Pinot Gris plantings to focus on Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Currently Adelsheim has 90 hectares in seven locations producing up to 50,000 cases, about 25% of which are from purchased fruit. The winery’s goal is to consolidate, be more focussed and produce even higher quality. The wine that sang for me was the 2012 Elizabeth’s Reserve Pinot Noir, which is made from a blend of Willamette fruit to give complexity. This made me wonder about the merits of the growing number of sub-appellations in Willamette, though the Boulder Bluff 2013 from the Chehalem Mountains AVA was delicious, too.

LIVE and sustainable

Adelsheim is one of 32 Oregon wineries and nearly 250 individual Oregon vineyards that are certified by LIVE (Low Impact Viticulture and Enology), a group started in 1997 to further education in sustainability and provide internationally-recognised third-party certification. David Adelsheim considers that LIVE will help the Oregon wine region survive long-term. Other notable names that also appear on LIVE’s winery list include Domaine Drouhin, Bethel Heights and Cristom.

Firesteed is a large winery by Oregon standards and Howard Rossbach, its president and founder, is another keen supporter of LIVE. The 50-acre home vineyard and its 200-acre Erratic Oaks Vineyard are certified, as is the winery itself. According to LIVE’s media pack, downloadable from their website at <https://livecertified.org/standards>, one of the features of its certification is the ‘whole-farm and whole-winery approach to sustainability. The entire property, including non-grape crops, landscaping, building operations, labour practices, even packaging must be managed to LIVE standards’.

Firesteed’s winery included plenty for the wine tech geek to ogle – new for me was the Pulsair regulator, which



Adelsheim’s vineyard in the Chehalem Mountains AVA.



From left: tasting 1995 Firesteed Citation Pinot Noir; Ken Pahlow of Walter Scott Wines; Kelley Fox with Maresh Red Barn Block old vine Pinot Noir; in Montinore's vineyard.

the winery has used for eight years. Coming from food technology where it is used as a mixer, a hollow rod injects a bubble of air into the bottom of the vat and it can be used instead of pump-overs for Pinot Noir. A five-year old article on Wines & Vines indicates this provides gentler handling in cap management and in blending. Firesteed's wines are improving, especially its Citation Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The latter is also built to last, as shown in samples from 2005 and an impressive 1995. And, I'm a sucker for its limey-fresh dry Riesling, a perfect pick-you-up.

The vineyard imperative

On the hill of Firesteed's impressive Erratic Oaks vineyard, we were just west of, but outside, the increasingly highly-regarded Eola-Amity Hills AVA and Howard pointed out the equally impressive vineyard slope across the Ballard Road. There was Croft Vineyard and next to it Freedom Hill Vineyard, planted originally in the 1980s and once known for supplying some of the valley's most famous Pinots from Ken Wright, Bethel Heights and many others.

Today, Freedom Hill remains a much-prized source of Pinot grapes and one of several vineyards used by Ken Pahlow of Walter Scott Wines, established in 2008 by Ken with his partner Erica Landon. Ken had long experience in working with other Oregon wineries, but his winemaking approach is resolutely along Burgundian lines. The one big difference is that the couple don't own any vineyards

and indeed, only farm one themselves. Yet, looking at the vineyard page on their website and discussing the wines, it is obvious that not only the terroir of each vineyard, but also each owner's story is something truly special for them. The young Walter Scott Pinots that I tasted were excellent, especially the 2014 Clos des Oiseaux, but the 2014 Chardonnay Cuvée Anne stole the show – yes, Burgundy style, but with a fruit quality from somewhere else, just as it should be.

Sub-AVAs give structure to the region's geography, but as top vineyards have proved their worth over the years, many of today's best winemakers take the single vineyard approach. Another vineyard cheerleader, who I first met at the Real Wine Fair in London and then spent a delightful couple of hours with in Willamette, is Kelley Fox, producer of perhaps the most refined and joyful Oregon Pinots I've tasted. On a grey morning, walking through the long grass and trees around Maresh Vineyard (pronounced Marsh) on the red earth of the Dundee Hills AVA was a serene moment. Kelley emphasised, "this is a farm" and told me she becomes healed each time she goes there, not only by the vines, but by the Maresh family, too. As well as the straight Maresh Pinot Noir, she now makes Maresh Red Barn Blocks from Pinot planted on its own roots in 1970 by Jim Maresh Senior, now aged 90, who still farms this block himself. The 2014 Red Barn Blocks had an intense, almost herbal tea-like quality with a velvety roundness and fabulous texture. The

other vineyard Kelley buys fruit from is the highly respected biodynamically-farmed Momtazi Vineyard in McMinnville. Momtazi wines need much more time and the energy emerges from the wine when you taste it – "fire energy", elucidated Kelley. Kelley explains her philosophy beautifully on her website at www.kelleyfoxwines.com/about/.

Scaled-up biodynamics

As elsewhere, there seem to be many interpretations of the biodynamic philosophy in Oregon. I visited the bijou Brick House Winery with 30 acres of vineyards, Demeter certified in 2005, and the mighty Montinore with 220 acres in a contiguous block, certified in 2008. At Montinore, general manager Kirstin Marchesi stressed that it is the vineyards that are certified, not the winery. It is a fabulous site with healthy-looking vines, a credit to Kirstin's father Rudy Marchesi, who was responsible for converting the vineyards when he first managed and later bought the site. Surprisingly, much is machine harvested and most whites are fermented with commercial yeast cultures. On the one hand, Montinore is known for its good value, but recipe-like wines at \$20 or less, including Pinot Gris, Almost Dry Riesling and Pinot Noir. On the other hand, British-born and Australian-trained winemaker Stephen Webber is given a free rein to experiment. His trial with a skin-contact Pinot Gris, aged in oak, acacia and steel was unconvincing, but he also shared a gorgeous Gewurztraminer, kept on skins in

amphora for six months. My favourite bottled wine here was one of the winery's more expensive, the 2013 Swan Song Pinot Noir, so called because it was the last vintage from phylloxera-affected vines, which have since been grubbed up. Incidentally, phylloxera seems to have killed vines only slowly in Oregon and those wineries that have hung onto their old ungrafted vines have reaped the benefits in the past quarter of a century.

At the delightfully old-fashioned Brick House I was received by Savannah Mills, the niece of owner Doug Tunnell, who was away on a rare vacation. Doug bought the farm and planted his first vineyards along organic lines in 1990 and later converted to biodynamics. His respect for the land and hard work shone through in the four wines I tasted. Unashamedly French in style (specifically, my notes say 'very, very Jurassic!') the 2013 Cascadia Chardonnay was fermented in barrel (mainly 500-litre) with natural yeast and full malolactic – after an hour it had really opened up, with some reduction giving way to more butter, spice and complexity. A slightly chilled 2014 Gamay – yes, the real deal – was simply fun, juicy and so drinkable that I bought my one bottle that I could pack to share with a friend in Texas. The two Pinot Noirs both showed bright acidity and life – true expressions of biodynamics.

Beautiful, natural and urban winemaking

The partners who own Antica Terra – a small outfit making only 3,500 cases a year, want to make “beautiful wine without veneer,” said Maggie Harrison, who learned winemaking at the California cult winery Sine Qua Non, with Elaine and Manfred Krankl. Whereas the vineyard is considered important, of course – the wines are partly from Antica Terra's own vineyard in the northern part of Eola and partly from purchased fruit – Maggie looks at a much bigger picture than many. She pointed out how Oregon remains young as a region and said that it is a life's work to build up its legacy. Blending the Pinots is the norm here (with one or two exceptions depending on the year). Not only are there different vineyard sources, but also a great range of sizes, ages, forests and coopers for the barrels. The result is a small

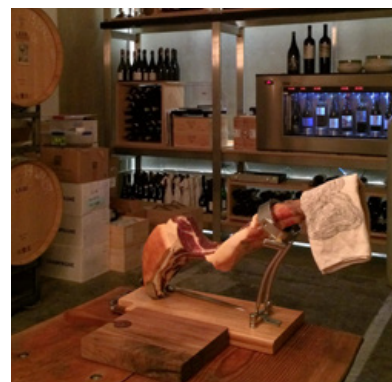
range of exceedingly high class Pinots and a lovely dark rosé that anyone who knows Jura well would call red... The way Maggie presented the wines to me is how she conducts tastings – at a price – to the public. With food. Fabulous jamón Iberico, foie gras, cheese and chocolate are offered together with not only Antica Terra wines, but also with other imported wines from friends, served from an oenomatic and seen as providing a complementary experience. Sitting at a long table at the back of the warehouse, this was a highly original experience.

Natural winemaking can be beautiful and it can be ugly, but what is sure is that it is alive and well in Oregon. Back in London at the Real Wine Fair I had tasted two elegant old-vine Semillons from Jeff Vejr's Golden Cluster winery and I had another taste at a lovely evening in Oregon hosted by Andrew and Annedria Beckham. I had to taste the Beckhams' wines too quickly, but they included a few excellent amphora wines, which are Andrew's speciality. In fact it is he, a professional potter-turned vintner, who is personally making terracotta amphorae for other wineries in Oregon. His Pinot Noirs showed promise as did a very pretty Pinot Gris that hadn't yet been bottled. These are just a couple of wineries at the forefront of Oregon's natural wine scene.

The Portland urban winemaking scene, according to the official Oregon wine website, was born in 2001 and the city now has around 20 wineries. I visited the Southeast

Wine Collective to meet one of its clients, Justin Russell, the owner and winemaker of the Jasper Sisco label. The small winery/warehouse in a busy little shopping street was buzzing with people – yes – making wine. Justin gave me a taste of a couple of rather dodgy Pinots from barrel and then opened two bottles of wild, but rather wonderful white wines, a very stony Riesling and a skin-fermented blend of Riesling, Pinot Gris and Orange Muscat from a high-altitude vineyard in northern Washington and finally a rather volatile Pinot Noir. Later at the SE Wine Collective's wine bar I tried a few highly-varied wines from other labels made there, highlighting a problem I'd been told about – for some sommeliers and wine geeks it's become a badge of office to make your own wine, even without any training or winery experience. But before I left, my heart and taste buds were lifted by meeting one of the SE Wine Collective's personnel, Luke Mathews, also known as Luke Wyld (he seems to have several personae). He moonlights making his own label, Statera Cellars, with his partner, focussed entirely on Chardonnay, a grape that I felt was being unfairly ignored in Oregon. The two wines I tasted from their first vintage, 2014, were both excellent. He makes his Chardonnays at Omera Cellars, where Chad Stock, another Oregon natural wine livewire, is winemaker. It was all starting to sound like one big family – and that sums up Oregon's great strength – at every level, it seems still to be a family affair.

Below from left: Brick House Wines; the tasting area at Antica Terra; Portland's Southeast Wine Collective.



Marisa D'Vari roams over to Roero DOCG in search of great value Nebbiolo and finds an obscure Piemontese grape, alongside the locals' favourites, Barbera and Arneis. Photos by Marisa.

Pondering Piemonte outside the box

With the recent multimillion dollar acquisition of Vietti, the historic Barolo winery, increases in the price of the region's wine and its vineyards are certain to occur. If you love Piemontese wine, however, you can find excellent examples of Nebbiolo, Barbera and Arneis from smaller Barolo producers, as well as from overlooked quality areas such as Roero DOCG.

Roero is a gorgeous region of north-west Italy, offering romantic hillside views, beautifully preserved castles, Romanesque churches and producers putting an increasing emphasis on high quality wine. One example of a Roero producer making very high-end Nebbiolo is Malvira, created in the 1950s by the determined Giuseppe Damonte, who knew the quality the area offered before it was made into a DOCG. The emphasis at Malvira is on single vineyards, each with unique soil that lends itself to a specific variety. They rival the famous names in Barolo in terms of aromas, flavours, balance and complexity.

Barbera breaking through

Ask a Piemonte local what their favourite wine is and "Barbera" is the likely answer. Virtually every winery produces this variety, which is usually matured in different ways to suit a particular taste and price point. One of the most memorable Barbera wines on this visit was the rich and complex Cascina Castlet Superiore, Barbera d'Asti DOCG, from the Litina vineyard. I also very much liked the rich, jammy 2015 Barbera d'Alba Valdisera, a co-operative wine from Terre del Barolo. The large family-owned Tenuta Carretta produces a wide range of fine wines, including the excellent 2011 Mora di Sassi Barbera d'Asti Superiore from Nizza, with rich, sharply focused aromas of black fruit.

Ruchè: another tannic Piemontese grape

In the past, the Ruchè grape has not received very much attention. It is a rather obscure local variety that shares some similarities with the major Piemontese grape, Nebbiolo, in that it tends to produce very tannic, light coloured wines with pronounced aromas and bouquet. The sleek, modern Montalbera winery is doing incredible things with this variety, especially as it produces 70% of the world's Ruchè. The 2015 Laccetto (which means 'The accent') is made from 90% of overripe, late-harvest grapes and 10% of grapes that have been dried in the cellar in a sterilised and temperature-controlled room. This Ruchè wine is quite delicious – it falls somewhere between a Nebbiolo and an Amarone with its rich, brandied cherry flavour.

Arneis: the producer's pride and joy

Virtually every producer takes special pride in producing Arneis, the local and rather neutral white variety. One excellent example is from Antonio Coscia, the fourth-generation winemaker of his family's Costa Catterina winery. His brown eyes sparkle as he pours me a delicious glass of Arneis wine he has named Arsivel, meaning 'sympatico'. Arneis is also a favourite of the Malvira winery, which produces it in



Left: Giacomo Damonte of Malvira in Roero.

sparkling, still and sweet (late harvest) styles. If that wasn't enough, Malvira's young winemaker Giacomo Damonte also makes an Arneis wine without added sulphur (with the label proclaiming this), and he pours me a taste of an aged Arneis from their Saglietto vineyard.

Agriturismo and restaurants on the rise

A significant trend in the region is the increasing number of producers building accommodation adjacent to their wineries to create an *agriturismo* or bed and breakfast facility. Among the newest additions are the cosy rooms built by Costa Catterina, which is run by owner Antonio's lovely wife Antonella. One luxurious example of a glamorous *agriturismo* is Villa Tiboldi, which is owned by Malvira, with its breathtaking views from individual terraces. Tenuta Carretta has elegant rooms as well. The *agriturismo* concept is beneficial both for the wineries and the guests, as wineries can benefit from the extra income, as well as the publicity, and guests can enjoy the pleasure of staying in a winery setting.

More wineries all over Piemonte are building restaurants or forming associations with them. Malvira has the kind of upscale restaurant favoured by the glitterati, offering its own wines as well as favourites from the Piemonte area, as does Tenuta Carretta. Sylla Sebaste has formed a relationship with a local, well-respected chef who creates seasonal multi-course menus for visitors to the winery.

For the most part, the local Roero winemaking families are focusing even more narrowly on what they do best: growing good grapes and making good wine.



Christine Havens meets Dr. Laura Catena and discovers what one Argentine research institute is doing to combat climate change. The photos are courtesy of the Catena Winery.

Research and resilience at high altitude

Climate change is everywhere according to Dr. Laura Catena, and tackling these problems is a race. “We need to look at life at all levels, using science to preserve nature and culture, and we don’t have much time.”

I recently had the opportunity to talk with Dr. Catena about what she and her team at the Catena Institute for Wine are doing to mitigate the effects of climate change. “A lot of what we’re doing now has to do with pruning and cover crops, but in the years ahead that won’t be enough.”

“As the climate-soil-variety equilibrium shifts, we’re looking for higher altitude sites in places like Salta and La Rioja. We’re considering mountain ranges where more water is available, and we’re also planting in Patagonia; they have more rain there. We’re going higher, and we’re moving south,” Dr. Catena explained.

Another strategy involves testing different clonal selections. In 1995, Catena and her team planted the French Malbec clone of Côt Noir in their La Pirámide Vineyard next to vines sourced from their historic, 87-year-old Angélica vineyard. By 2003, they were able to confirm that the characteristics of the French clone differed greatly from Argentine Malbec selections. “Lamarck said that as the giraffe’s neck got longer, its offspring would also inherit a longer neck,” she explained.

What Catena is referring to is the work of French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who proposed that organisms, both flora and fauna, pass on traits acquired during their lifetime

to their offspring. In the case of the giraffe, a prodigiously long neck allows it to graze the upper canopy of vegetation with ease – a useful adaptation in a drought-prone climate. It turns out that Lamarckian theory and transgenerational epigenetic inheritance holds true for *Vitis vinifera* as well.

The Malbec vines brought from France to Argentina in 1853 have since thrived in some of the world’s highest vineyards – a very different terroir and a very different set of stressors as compared to its native Cahors. High altitude plantings receive more sunlight, particularly UV-B radiation, and the vines respond to this damage genetically by producing more antioxidants, and in turn, more phenolic and anthocyanin compounds. Thicker leaves and the accumulation of protective UV-absorbing compounds, including flavonoids in berry skins, translate into wines with a darker color, more concentrated flavours and longer ageing potential. In the case of the Côt trial, test vines produced higher yields and clusters with larger berries. The resulting wines were disappointingly rustic.

“We compared our Malbec selections to selections from Europe and the United States,” she continued. “As

an experiment, we also planted some ancestral varieties to recover forgotten pre-phyloxera grape varieties. One of the interesting characteristics of these grape varieties is that they are very resistant to drought, which would be a very good advantage in the context of climate change. Some people now think we can take vines from one place – where vines have adapted to withstand water stress – to another region where drought has become an issue. Once that vine is in an environment that no longer has these pressures, the epigenetic changes stay, they don’t disappear.”

But there is another frontier in research that is particularly exciting to Dr. Catena’s team, and it lies in the soil beneath our feet. The soil microbiome and its cocktail of yeast and bacteria form an invisible network. “Rhizobacteria,” she said, “helps the roots withstand water stress and nutrient uptake. The root gives the bacteria food in exchange for water – this happens in any tree or plant in the forest, and the soil is filled with microbes. The same sort of exchange occurs in human gut bacteria. Finding the right rhizobacteria would be a huge development, and then we could potentially inoculate the vine against water stress, reducing its water



use by as much as half. When I think of viticulture, I make my wine, but it's not a life and death situation – preserving it is important to our culture, but it's not like we have to have it. We might identify microbes in vines that might help other crops.”

Dr. Catena seems to find interconnectedness in everything; our conversation takes unexpected twists and turns, and we chat briefly about her work as a physician in San Francisco, where she spends six days per month in the pediatric emergency care unit. “Sometimes I think about whether I should continue or stop. Sometimes I'm really tired at the end of the day,” she confesses. “But, you only live once – the hospital, I love going there, it's so interesting and being a doctor has this aspect to it that is instantly rewarding. It goes back to our earlier discussion, what you do with your time. When people don't have their health they don't have anything.”

The studies that take place over the years in her semi-arid vineyards move at a glacial pace compared to

the fast pace of the emergency room. For the moment, Dr. Catena seems to be finding the balance in her split endeavours. “I just read the most incredible article about a group at Harvard, where they found bacteria that can degrade the plastic in the oceans, then yet another family of bacteria that then metabolizes the by-products of the plastic



once it's been broken down. We need to bring this kind of creativity to all the research we do.”

Currently, the Catena Institute is working on a number of different studies with a goal of creating quality wines from sustainable terroirs for the next 100 years. “One of the tragedies in Mendoza is that the whole area that produced table wines in the east has shifted, that's not a successful story for me,” admits Catena. “All of the people in the east are now poor; we want to bring viticulture back to that region. Right now we're trying to cultivate an interest in varieties that were grown in our country for centuries, but have not found a place in the market. Bonarda is one such example, where we're using science and marketing to revitalise the region.”

“I judge a place by their gardens. If there are flowers, people are happy. You can tell when people are doing well; there are coffee shops, and restaurants, and this wonderful vibrancy. If I can bring more prosperity to the region, my impact is larger as a winegrower than as a physician.”



General manager, Ansgar Flaaten and sales and marketing manager, Carol Maggs of Allée Bleu.

Lindsay Oram digs down into the roots of three very different but successful South African wine businesses. Pictures are by Lindsay.

Contrasting capers

I have always found the origins of a wine business fascinating. Why was the business set up? Why in this particular location? Clearly there is a financial consideration, but what are the other reasons; historical, opportunistic or social? While in Europe many wine businesses have been established for centuries and some still remain in the founding family's ownership, the original reasons may be lost in time. However, in the New World wine businesses are newer, therefore the reasons for the where and why are often easier

to establish and understand. During a visit to South Africa last year I found out that these reasons can be as varied as the wines are themselves. What follows are three such examples:

The origins of the Waverley Hills Wine Estate, established in 1999, are arguably a natural extension of the parent company Brenn-O-Kem (Pty) Ltd's activities, as the company recycles by-products created by South African wineries. These by-products include wine lees, skins, seeds and tartrates and are used to produce items such as cream of tartar, grape spirit and grape seed extract. Grape seed

extract, as used in the company's Oxiprovín tablets, is an antioxidant and free radical scavenger, said to protect against certain diseases, such as cancer. The extraction of by-products, although necessary, is something we, as wine communicators, rarely consider.

In keeping with Brenn-O-Kem (Pty) Ltd recycling and sustainability ethics, the vineyard is farmed organically. Waverley Hills produces 200,000 bottles of organic wine annually under the auspices of winemaker, Johan Delpoit. So, while wine is an important part of the company, recycling remains the core business of Brenn-O-Kem (Pty).

Similarly to Waverley Hills, Stellenbosch Vineyards has existed in its current form since 1998, but in its case as a public rather than private company. Nonetheless, this is not a new venture and the company has metamorphosed from a wine co-operative and the Welmoed farm, where the current business is located, dates back to 1690. Stellenbosch Vineyards produces over 1 million bottles annually, thus making it a considerably larger producer than Waverley Hills. In contrast to Waverley Hills, wine production is Stellenbosch Vineyards' core business.

Allée Bleue Wine Estate in Franschhoek Valley was purchased in 1999 by the Dauphin Family, but like Stellenbosch Vineyards, the estate dates back to 1690. It is a 200ha farm, of which 25ha is vines and 100ha is other agricultural crops, including hydroponically grown herbs that can be cropped several times a year. The company produces 365,000 bottles of wine annually.

While 1998/9 was clearly an important year for all the aforementioned wine companies, the ownership ranges from family to company, and both private and public. The number of bottles produced varies, as does the dependence on wine as a revenue stream. As a consequence of these factors, each of the companies takes a different view on sales strategy and the markets they are targeting, whether export, domestic or local.

The export question

Stellenbosch Vineyards has a strong export focus with 80% of its wine shipped out, mainly to Northern Europe. The high

level of exports is unsurprising when you produce over a million bottles annually in a country that makes more wine than it consumes. Nevertheless, exporting can carry a high cost, firstly in setting up and staffing an export department, but also in dealing with currency functions. But perhaps the largest cost is that of innovation, as to stay ahead in the highly competitive export market it is crucial to develop new products and packaging formats. One such innovation from Stellenbosch Vineyards is Arniston Bay Infusions, a wine-based range of drinks with added botanicals and fruit flavours. While many in the wine trade may look down on these wine-based products, in many ways they are a modern version of traditional drinks such as Sangria or mulled wine.

To have all your eggs in the export basket, especially if wine is your only business could be dangerous, however. Outside forces, such as trade agreements, can adversely affect your business. While only 20% of Stellenbosch Vineyards' wines are sold within South Africa, 20% of 1 million bottles is still a sizeable business.

At the opposite end of the scale Waverley Hills, whose parent company is less dependent on wine income, exports only 25% of its 200,000 bottles. This means there is less need for a highly-staffed export department. Arguably, as

a producer of organic wines, it perhaps means that constant innovation is far less critical, as 'organic' itself is the USP. Despite this, it leaves 75% of the production to be sold on the over-supplied domestic South African market. The answer at Waverley Hills is to focus not on the broader home market but on the local and tourist market with 30% of the wine production sold on site, through the restaurant winery and shop. While there are obviously costs involved in setting up and staffing both a restaurant and shop, this is offset by the advantages of immediate payment, no distribution costs and increased margins.

Likewise, Allée Bleue sells 20% of its wine production through its onsite shop, restaurant and hospitality facility. However, as a larger producer than Waverley Hills, in a country with limited home sales opportunities, like Stellenbosch vineyards it has chosen to focus on exports. Of the 365,000 bottles of wine produced annually, 60% is exported. That said, wine represents only 20% of Allée Bleue's revenue, while herbs account for 35%. Additionally, herbs are less labour intensive and unlike vines they are not subject to varying annual weather conditions since its herbs are grown hydroponically. That said, Allée Bleue's wine business is profitable overall, albeit subsidised by other parts of the farm.

So while these producers are all situated in South Africa, they have different roots. These range from the traditional integrated mixed farming model of Allée Bleue, to the involvement from a co-operative format at Stellenbosch Vineyards and an extension of a related business at Waverley Hills. Hence, the reliance on wine as a percentage of revenue for each company differs greatly. This diversity in turn has influenced the differing business models adopted by each company, all successful in their own way; perhaps illustrating the diversity of the South African wine industry as a whole.



Left: John Delpoit of Waverley Hills. Below: Abraham De Villiers, Chantelle Boucher and Petri du Beer of Stellenbosch Vineyards.



The noble Hotel Kronenschlösschen on the banks of the River Rhine at Eltville-Hattenheim is prized by food and wine lovers for its superb cuisine and incredibly deep and varied wine list. It is also revered for hosting the Rheingau Gourmet & Wein Festival, the 21st version of which takes place with 24 chefs and 16 wine producers from 23rd February to 12th March 2017.

While Herr Hans B. Ullrich, the hotel's owner, is the host of this annual event, he was a guest in his own house of Jan-Erik Paulson, the Swedish-born and German resident owner of Paulson Rare Wine, a continuously re-filled treasure trove of mature bottles purchased through a web of contacts, built up from deep knowledge and constant research. In a spirit of generosity which is so admirable in those with fine cellars, he had planned a weekend at the end of October to share a few dozen bottles and had sent me an immediately accepted invitation to take part. Here are the wines we savoured and the dishes that accompanied them:

Dinner, Friday 28th October – Ch. Cos d'Estournel 1996-1928

The wines were served in six flights of five wines, with Jan-Erik Paulson asking after each flight for a show of hands of



The Cos d'Estournel line-up with Nils Paulson.

Steven Spurrier savours a wine weekend in the Rheingau and revels in much more than excellent local wines. Photos by Jan-Erik Paulson.

The ultimate vertical series

who preferred which vintage. Across the range the colours were very fine, younger than I expected, with depth, clarity and 'Cos-ness' very present.

Aperitif – Bride Valley 2013 Blanc de Blancs

Flight One – Kikok, corn, fermented garlic

- » 1971 – Still lively with more vigour than expected, ripe middle fruit, very pure, a lovely claret, still quite there.
- » 1973 – Light and nice clarity, but the lightness of the vintage leads to a dried out finish.
- » 1975 – Good depth of fruit and firm but not green tannins, the concentration of the year is there and it still has a future.
- » 1979 – More youthful with warm, slightly earthy flavours, shows the over-production of that year, but pleasant and balanced.
- » 1981 – Quite robust on both nose and palate then tightens up on the finish, but the Cos fruit will stay for a few more years.

Voting was varied, with the 1975 coming out ahead.

Flight Two – Chestnut soup

- » 1982 – Very good ripeness and a lovely nose, depth, suppleness and purity, now to 2025.
- » 1983 – Nose and palate showing a briary leanness but still good and plainly St-Estèphe.
- » 1984 – More fruit and 'claret-ness' than expected from this unripe year, still good for a year or two.
- » 1985 – Looks much younger than 30 years old, really good fleshy fruit with depth to keep it through 2030.
- » 1986 – Lots of depth and some spice, but a bit hard

and 'four square' compared to 1985 and a much shorter future.

There was support for 1983, more for 1982, but 1985 got the most votes.

Flight Three – Veal cheeks with parsnip and Jerusalem artichokes

- » 1928 – Deep red, tawny rim, lovely wild roses bouquet with both fragrance and sweetness on the palate, great presence and purity, not drying out, a great wine.
- » 1934 – Oddly concentrated and 'porty', finishes chunky and dry.
- » 1950 – Pale and cloudy, no fruit, probably poorly stored.
- » 1952 – Still very young looking, coffee bean nose, impression of 'roasted' fruit, interesting but not elegant.
- » 1953 – Fine colour with no real age, beautifully expressive with fine texture, a 'feminine' Cos, slight dryness on the finish, a really lovely wine.

Only the 1953 and 1928 received votes, the majority going to the latter.

Flight Four – Iberico pork curry with pumpkin

- » 1955 – Sadly corked but there was fine, firm fruit behind this.
- » 1959 – Deep and still fresh colour, nose and palate show the heat of the year, a hint of volatile acidity but a good solid wine.
- » 1962 – Good firm colour and very good claret, quite dry but the natural richness of St-Estèphe is still just there.

- » 1961 – Surprisingly lighter in colour and body than 1962, but showing a supple, lissom texture of fruit with ripeness that will keep it going.
- » 1970 – Young colour, firm and full, robust and rich, almost Californian, more solid than elegant with a few years to go.
- » There was a little support for 1962 and 1959 but 1961 took it with ease.

Flight Five – Deer, Brussels sprouts and dumplings

- » 1987 – Nicely balanced wine, nice clarity of fruit but drying out.
- » 1988 – Very good colour and depth of fruit and very Cos, robust, firm with striking clarity and a good future.
- » 1989 – Lots of depth, shows the heat of the vintage and huge richness but also a little raw on the finish. Less balanced than 1988.
- » 1990 – Quite different to 1989, with fragrance, wild violets on the nose, classy depth, elegant and smooth, a 'Lafite' Cos, good for another decade.
- » 1991 – Richer and deeper than expected but slightly earthy and chunky, young but more concentrated than elegant.

The votes were split between 1990 and 1988, the latter winning on a recount.

Flight Six – Assortment of local cheeses

- » 1992 – Good colour and some concentration but the lack of ripeness is evident.
- » 1993 – Good lifted floral fruit, very expressive with freshness and vigour for a few more years.
- » 1994 – Good colour and depth, more than a hint of brett, solid and grippy.
- » 1995 – Good broad fruit, depth and weight, all of a piece, just a little chunky, but a good future.
- » 1996 – Deep rich colour and more depth and polish than 1995, still very young and has a very good future.

The vote went almost unanimously to 1996.

Asked for the best wine of the evening, nine of the 14 tasters chose the 1928.

Lunch, Saturday 29th October – Weingut Robert Weil 2013-1921

One of the Rheingau's greatest estates with 100 hectares of only Riesling around the village of Kiedrich. The soil is green/grey slate. The Klosterberg and Turmberg vineyards are Weil monopolies, while the Gräfenberg, with a little loam soil, is 95% owned. The wines were presented by Wilhelm Weil, pictured on right.

Aperitif – Champagne Chartogne-Taillet Rosé

Flight One – The three estates in 2013 - Halibut with radish and gooseberries.

All wines were harvested at 96 degrees Oechsle, so of potential Auslese ripeness and were fermented dry to 12.5% alcohol. The wines were in magnums.

- » Kiedrich Klosterberg – Lemon pale, beautiful florality, superb purity, perfect acidity to match the 6g/l residual sugar, still so young. 96/100. 2020-40.
- » Kiedrich Turmberg – Same purity and florality but tighter with unbelievable clarity and precision. RS of 5g/l and 8.5g/l acidity, for the long term. 98/100. 2020-60.
- » Kiedrich Gräfenberg – Fuller colour, broader and richer on both nose and palate though just 4 g/l RS, this is Montrachet to Turmberg's Chevalier. 98/100. 2020-50.

Eight votes went to Gräfenberg; three each to Turmberg and Klosterberg.

Flight Two – Kiedrich Gräfenberg 2010-1953 – Salmon, Pak Choi, sweet potatoes.

Wilhelm Weil had chosen cooler years that were less full-bodied and rich, as for him this is the 'optimum' style of Riesling, not the 'maximum' style.

- » 2010 – Lemon yellow, touch of dry honey, great purity with the slate showing more than the loam, very fine weight and structure. 94/100. To 2030.
- » 2008 – Fullish yellow, relatively rich with the same touch of honey that softens the acidity, quite open. 92/100. To 2025.
- » 2004 – Pale lemon/yellow, still quite tight and very fresh, a beautifully vibrant wine, totally pure with brilliant clarity. 98/100. To 2040.



- » 1953 – For Weil one of the two, with 1921, best vintages of the 20th century. Fine gold colour, terrific vigour and vibrancy on the palate, evidently mature but not showing its 63 years. The concentrated light honey matches the Riesling acidity, a great experience. 98/100. To 2033.

The 1953 being in a class of its own, 13 votes went to 2004, one for 2010.

Flight Three – Kiedrich Gräfenberg Auslese 2007-1921 – Assortment of local cheeses.

- » 2007 – Pale amber gold, really lovely expression with richness (130g/l RS) and bright acidity. 93/100. To 2027.
- » 2004 – Brilliant pale gold, terrific vibrancy and grip, very much follows the dry 2004 with 180 g/l RS showing a perfect expression of the vineyard in the Auslese style. 97/100. To 2045.
- » 2001 – This was the estate's Gold Capsule bottling, with 200g/l RS but never any botrytis. Full amber gold, very rich and full, more Sauternes, even Vin Santo,

than what has come before, hugely rich with superb acidity showing through. 97/100. To 2035.

- » 1921 – This bottle was offered by Wilhelm Weil, who now has just seven bottles left in the cellar. The only time in recent years that a bottle of the estate's 1921 was sold was at a Christie's auction at Schloss Johannisberg held by Michael Broadbent on 13th November 1999, with a reserve price of 1,000 Deutsch Marks (DM), the hammer price rising to 20,000 DM – a price still not rivalled at auction for a single bottle of white wine. Bright amber gold, quite incredible 'burnished' nose, waxy and polished like dark wood, while concentration, elegance and maturity meet to form a totally perfect wine, nothing out of place, quite incredible at this age. 100++

The 1921 left the room silent, no votes were offered.

Dinner, Saturday 29th October – Rare Wines from Jan-Erik Paulson's Cellar

Aperitif – Champagne Chartogne-Taillet Les Orizeaux 2010

Flight One – Terrine of goose liver with pear and hazelnuts

- » 1949 Ch. Bastor-Lamontagne Barsac – Pale amber-gold, fully sweet and full of energy, richness and length, totally balanced, perfect example.
- » 1934 Ch. Filhot Sauternes – Amber gold, really beautifully expressed, acidity coming to the fore, but still sweet, pure and elegant, very fine.
- » 1891 Ch. Coutet Barsac – Red amber, the colour of a 40-year-old tawny port, rich waxy nose, vibrant fruit but also vibrant acidity which takes over after a fleeting impression of sweetness, strikingly fresh for 125 years old.

The Bastor-Lamontagne took eight votes to Filhot's six.

Flight Two – Raw marinated fjord trout, avocado, miso, chanterelle mushrooms

- » 1990 Riesling Brand Domaine Zind-Humbrecht – Quite advanced pale amber colour, rather burnt caramel nose but Riesling comes back on the palate as does freshness to match the broad richness. 93/100. To 2020.

- » 1990 Le Montrachet Louis Latour – Full gold, baked apple nose and full maturity on the palate, has weight but the fruit has not held up. 88/100.
- » 1990 Grüner Veltliner Vintothekfüllung Weingut Emmerich Knoll – Fine lemon yellow, floral white and yellow summer fruits nose, superbly expressed and lifted palate, still young, a very fine blend of power and elegance. 98/100. To 2030. (It was this wine that came top alongside international Chardonnays in a mid-1990s London tasting organised by Jan-Erik Paulson which opened the world's eyes to Grüner Veltliner). This wine took the majority of the votes.

Flight Three – Veal with marinated vegetables

- » 1953 Ch. Palmer Margaux – lovely colour, rose petal bouquet and taffeta texture, a wine of great purity with some weight, presence and natural ripeness. 95/100.
- » 1953 Ch. Haut-Brion Graves – Bright red, clear, clean and youthful, all the wild roses of Haut-Brion on the nose and firm delicacy of fruit on the palate, pure harmony. 99/100.
- » 1953 Ch. Lafite-Rothschild Pauillac – Richest colour of the three, surprisingly robust for 1953 with touches of iodine and iron, but opens up well at the end. 92/100.

All 14 votes went to the Haut-Brion, declared later the wine of the evening.

Flight Four – Shoulder of beef, celery and plums

- » 1949 Charmes-Chambertin Doudet-Naudin – Young colour and good smooth flavour with strong hints of wine from further south to add richness. 89/100.
- » 1937 Clos des Lambrays Morey-Saint-Denis – Superbly young colour and full of energy, purity and depth, the tannins will take over, but very fine now. 94/100.
- » 1926 Nuits-Saint-Georges (German bottled in a Bordeaux bottle) – fine ripe red, no real age, lovely fragrant nose with natural sweetness and balancing acidity, the flavours still vigorous at 90 years old. 94/100.

Votes were split equally between the last two.

Flight Five – Pigeon breast and leg, mushrooms and pommes dauphinoise

- » 1970 Ch. La Mission Haut-Brion Graves – Rather murky red, slight lack of clarity, some ripeness but also volatile acidity which dominates. 86/100.
- » 1970 Ch. Latour Pauillac – Dense young red, lots of grip on the palate, very young, not yet fully open yet recognisably grand and recognisably Latour, reckoned to be the best wine of that year. 97/100.
- » 1970 Ch. Cheval-Blanc Saint-Emilion (magnum) – Rich, young and smooth colour, lovely rich texture and still full of black fruits and energy, a classic Cheval Blanc with a fine, always seductive future. 95/100.

The Latour received ten votes with four going to Cheval Blanc.

Flight Six – Assortment of local cheeses

- » 1997 Taylor's Vintage Port – Dense colour, no age at all, fully rich and spicy but still a bit raw and tannic, a great Port which needs another 10 years. 94/100.
- » 1963 Taylor's Vintage Port – Still youthful red, lots of spice and energy, still floral with wild violets, harmoniously smooth with finesse and natural strength. 96/100.
- » 1948 Taylor's Vintage Port (bottled by Christie, Manson and Wood) – mid-red, slightly cloudy but lovely sweet fruit, chocolatey with lifted acidity, quite delicious. 97/100.

Votes were two for 1997, five for 1963, seven for 1948.

Before we broke up a vote was taken for the wine of the weekend. Three guests chose Cos d'Estournel 1928, five chose Haut-Brion 1953 and I together with six others chose Weil's Kiedrich Gräfenberg Riesling Auslese 1921. Perhaps the Hotel Kronenschlösschen will see such wines again, but I know I will not.



Neil Fairlamb tastes a Sonoma icon that tops Parker's scale and finds considerable differences between vintages.

Photos are courtesy of Jackson Family Wines.

The magic of Mayacamas' micro-crus



A rare opportunity to taste ten vintages of one of Robert Parker's 100-point, iconic California wines in London's Corinthia Hotel, in October 2016, was not to be missed. This was the Bordeaux-inspired and Merlot-based La Muse from the Vérité winery, owned by Jackson Family Wines. The vintages ranged from 2006 back to 1998, with the added bonus of a taste of great things to come in the form of the 2013 release of not only La Muse but also La Joie (Cabernet Sauvignon-based) and Le Désir (Cabernet-Franc based).

The tasting also celebrated 50 years of winemaking by Pierre Seillan, who is Vérité's first and only winemaker since it was founded in 1998. Originally from Gascony and with considerable experience in the Loire (Château de Targé) and Bordeaux, Pierre is a global winemaker and the vigneron of further Jackson Family Wines properties, in

St-Emilion (principally Château Lassègue) and Arcanum in Castelnuovo Berardenga in Chianti Classico.

Vérité is a complex operation with 40 micro-crus along the western slopes of the Mayacamas Mountain range in Sonoma County, focusing specifically on the Alexander Valley, Bennett Valley, Chalk Hill and Knights Valley AVAs. These reflect a huge variety of soil types and the *droit du sol* – the right of the soil – dominates the winemaking approach. Chalk Hill, for example, has a mineral note from the chalky soil and both here and in Bennett Valley where sandy loam dominates, the north-west facing foothills are ideal for Merlot, keeping coolness at night and in the morning. Alexander Valley vineyards have more elevation and a rocky, red volcanic soil that forces vines to develop strong root systems. Knights Valley has more gravelly volcanic soil and south-west exposure. Throughout the region, cool Pacific-influenced nights moderate the summer heat and extend the growing season.

Pierre also has access to a vast resource of barrel selections for ageing, with all barrels for Vérité being of 100% new French oak, with many different toasting variations to master. Jackson has its own stave mill and can draw on wood sources from 15 forests. Like the blending of the grapes, the integration of the oak and fruit is an orchestration of so many strands of flavour; a winemaker like Pierre is a symphonist!

The trio of La Muse, La Joie and Le Désir were each given 100 points by Robert Parker for the 2013 vintage so the tasting could hardly have begun more auspiciously. Indeed, La Muse 2013 started the tasting at the top, with a rich, heavenly nose of ripe fruit and succulent texture on



Pierre Seillan has been Vérité's winemaker since the Sonoma winery was founded in 1998.

the palate, aided by the polished oak quality (15 months of ageing) and was already approachable but with 20 years ahead of it. Merlot normally comprises 86%-90% of the blend with the rest usually from the Cabernets but in this vintage only Cabernet Franc and some Malbec were used. La Joie (71% Cabernet Sauvignon with Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot) had, as expected, a firmer structure, very strong tannins and a hard, long finish. Le Désir (62% Cabernet Franc) has a lighter frame and is entirely balanced, with an elegant structure, showing the careful handling of the Cabernet Franc based on Pierre's early experience in Saumur-Champigny. It may turn out to be the best-balanced wine of the trio. It is intriguing that at Arcanum, the Tuscan property in the south-east corner of Chianti Classico, the top wine made by Pierre there is primarily Cabernet Franc, and the 2010 showed very well after the Vérité tasting.

The vertical tasting of La Muse showed considerable variation in vintage conditions and implied that California, while blessed with many advantages, is not always a paradise for winemakers. The influence of El Niño can make

for some wet and cold growing seasons but the challenge is to select, prune carefully and concentrate on the micro-crus, the individual vineyard plots. This is Pierre's specialism.

The 1998 vintage was badly affected by spring rains and late flowering but the wine is at its apogee of mellow richness with a prune flavour and soft texture. The 1999 had similar wet winter conditions early in the year and a cool summer rescued by a warm August; the wine is fully mature, yet fading a little. So too was the 2000, a year of mixed weather; both vintages should be enjoyed now for their mellow maturity. By contrast, 2001 had a very cold even frosty April after bud break that restricted the berry growth but a fine summer ripened the smaller berries and the result was a smoky, ripe, fruity wine still with plenty of power and promise. A difficult beginning but a successful conclusion in this vintage. The 2002 was a more even year climatically and the wine was at its best, with rich plummy notes maturing into spicy, dried fruit flavours. The 2003 was to me even better. It was again a variable year of heavy spring rain and September heat, with extraordinary ripe fruity flavours giving a complete, voluptuous wine. The 2004 was an early harvest, with perhaps a less complex evolution of flavours. The 2005 was one of the best wines; interestingly it was also a great year in Pierre's Italian and Bordeaux properties; a great vintage in three estates so far apart is, apparently, very rare. La Muse 2005 was still firm and tannic, a *vin de garde* as was clear from its 18 months in oak. Though a more difficult year with a cool and wet spring and summer, 2006 was a triumph of the vigneron's art as, though not the richest wine, it was balanced and elegant and offered perfect drinking at ten years old.

Jackson Family Wines is truly global with tentacles stretching from 30 wineries in California, to Oregon, Chile, Australia, France, Italy and South Africa. The Kendall-Jackson Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay continues to be the number one selling Chardonnay in the US. This focus on La Muse from Sonoma showed the huge effort of investment in time and money, and the best talent, combining to produce a great California wine over a span of 15 years of vintages. What a privilege to taste!

Book reviews



André Deyrieux –
A la Rencontre des Cépages Modestes & Oubliés

Dunod, €29, 228 pages, hardback.

Review by Wink Lorch

You might think that there would be little more to write about grape varieties, following the publication of *Wine Grapes* (detailing 1,368 varieties) in 2012 by the three Js, joined in 2015, by a new edition (in French) of the nonagenarian Pierre Galet's encyclopaedia of grape varieties. Yet, for those of us specialising in certain wine regions, where rare grapes abound, that simply isn't the case – there is a mass of information to be uncovered. Indeed, in the past decade, there has been an encouraging resurgence of interest in rescuing obscure grape varieties from oblivion and many vine conservatories, as well as associations of wine pros and amateurs, have taken on this mission.

This book is only in French and the nearest translation of the title that I can come up with is 'Discovering humble and forgotten grape varieties'. André Deyrieux is named on the cover as the author, but he was, more realistically, the content editor, working with several other enthusiastic writers, including Jean Rosen. For some years, the latter has organised an annual conference on rare grape varieties and through this, the book was born and later,

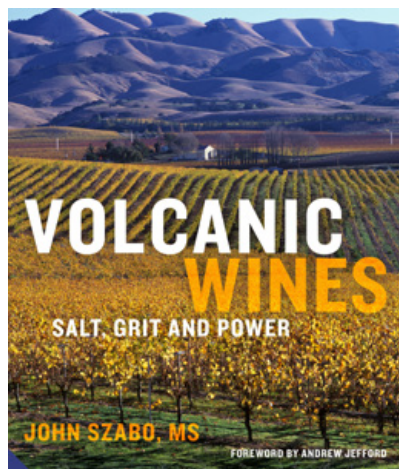
almost miraculously, taken on by the publisher Dunod, part of the Hachette group.

The first 45 pages of the book provide an introduction to the subject, through essays and explanations written by several different people. They vary in their usefulness, but do set the scene well overall. The essence of the book though is the profiles of the 50 grape varieties they have chosen to highlight, all of which are being made into wine somewhere in France. Some choices, like Alsace's Sylvaner or the Languedoc's Cinsaut may be surprising, but fall into the 'humble' category, I guess. However, at the other extreme are Genouillet (central Loire) and Rieyrenc & Oiellade (Languedoc), grapes that I'd never heard of, and rare Alpine varieties that I know well including Mollard, Etraire de l'Audi and Persan – only a few hectares of each of these are planted today.

The writing style of the profiles is much easier for a non-French native to understand and given a light humorous, but informative touch. Each one ends with a short piece about a vigneron, who is growing and making a wine from the variety concerned.

I have often complained about the presentation of wine books published in France, but this one is a sheer delight in terms of layout and overall design. The only let-down is the quality of the photographs, but no doubt there was no budget to pay for professional ones. A real *bête noir* of mine is that the landscapes photographs used (rather than pictures of specific grape varieties or vignerons) are utterly useless without a caption and these are glaringly absent.

Quotations and sayings are dotted throughout the book. I love this one from Leonard Humbrecht of Alsace: "Le cépage est le prénom; le terroir est le nom de famille" meaning 'the grape variety is the first name, and the terroir is the surname'. For readers of French, this book is a must for grape geeks.



John Szabo MS
- *Volcanic Wines:
Salt, Grit and
Power*

Jacqui Small LLP,
256 pages,
£30, hardback.

**Review by Robert
Smyth**

Given the rising interest in this 'explosive' subject, *Volcanic Wines: Salt, Grit and Power* by John Szabo MS is a timely tome, which takes in more than 300 winemakers and wineries in 22 regions across nine countries.

Before he sets off on a selected tour of many of the world's volcanic terroirs, Toronto-based John, who became Canada's first Master Sommelier in 2004, describes how volcanoes form. He explains it in clear and concise language in what feels like the right amount of detail to non-geologists, who nevertheless know something about rock/soil formation. Early in the book, John explains that given the huge differences in soil composition, grapes, climatic and other key factors – rather than citing an individual, definitive style of volcanic wine – he prefers to talk in terms of a family of volcanic wines with certain commonalities.

'Number one is that wines from volcanic soils hinge on a common mouth-watering quality, sometimes from high acids, almost always from a palpable saltiness, sometimes both,' he writes. He adds that mineral salts, 'may explain the vague but pleasantly bitter taste found in some wines'. He then goes on to discuss the savoury character that wines originating from volcanic terroirs appear to have in common and plants himself firmly in the 'minerality camp': 'Volcanic wines have fruit, of course, but it's often accompanied by, if not dominated by non-fruity flavours in the earthy and herbal spectrums of flavour along with all of the nuances

covered under the magnificently useful, multi-dimensional term minerality and all of its varied definitions. Minerality and volcanic wines walk hand-in-hand.'

He also mentions that young volcanic soils (that are formed on lavas) in particular have not had sufficient time to weather into moisture-retaining soils, which leads to more stress for the vines and ultimately higher quality wine. An example of young volcanic soils is Santorini, which John explains is one of two (along with Milos) volcanic islands in the otherwise limestone-dominated Cyclades chain of Greek islands. This chapter starts with a dramatic close up shot of a bizarre basket-shaped cultivated vine, which protects against the strong wind. "The length's that people go through to make wine amazes me," exclaimed John as this picture came up on the Budapest leg of the launch of the book as part of his presentation. Incidentally, John has Hungarian roots. I actually ran into him in Hungary's tiny but prized volcanic (basalt-based) region of Somló when we were researching our respective books.

The bulk of *Volcanic Wines* is divided up into regional descriptions and producer profiles from different parts of the volcanic wine world: Pacific Northwest, Northern California, Chile, Macaronesia (The Azores, the Canary Islands and Madeira), Alsace and Germany, Italy (a hive of volcanic activity), Santorini and Hungary. John delves deep into the composition and formation of each specific region's volcanic soils and skilfully describes the plethora of other factors that determine the character of the wines.

The writing flows (pardon the pun!) smoothly and the substantial text is broken up with plentiful, predominantly colour photographs of volcanic landscapes, formations, vineyards and the vintners themselves.

The book contains a foreword by Andrew Jefford, who notes that this study of terroir goes outside the usual regional or national approach, adding that it was high time for a volcanic offering. Overall, *Volcanic Wines* is a fresh (like the wines themselves) and very worthy addition to a wine writer's library and looks set to further raise the profile of wines from volcanic terroirs. It scooped this year's André Simon award for Best Drink Book.

The editor's jaundiced view of the future of wine, aka a column filler...

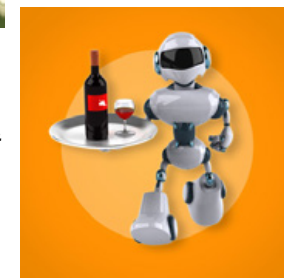
Having thrown down the gauntlet to CWW's photographers to share with us some of their best images to represent the future of wine – and having given them some ideas – responses were slow at first. At one point I thought I would only receive photographs of amphorae... Nervous that my idea wouldn't work and with some credits to use up at Fotolia (an online image service), I started searching on there for some back-up images. Below are the best that I found.

Right: The impossible future of wine on demand that some of us may wish for...



Left: A very real and encouraging future of sustainability that some of us may also wish for.

Right: Perhaps the most disturbing and worrying image of the future of wine service – that I certainly don't wish for.



Forthcoming wine events

In our listings we include major generic tastings and events. Nearly all trade tastings and other events in the UK can be found on the Wine & Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) website at: <http://www.wsta.co.uk/resources/trade-diary> or by downloading its app for iPhone/Android at: <http://www.wsta.co.uk/download-app>. There is also a useful diary of events for the UK on-trade at: <http://imbibe.com/events>.

Below and continuing opposite you will also find a list of major international conferences and trade fairs for the first half of 2017.

The table opposite lists key London tastings, mainly generic, up to the end of April. This should be of help even to those travelling in from outside. These are tastings that, as members of CWW, you should be able to attend easily, even at the last minute. **Note the CWW tasting in red and reserve another date in your diaries: this year's AGM on 25th May in London.**

International trade (and part-trade) fairs February-June 2017

DATE	Event/ description	Location	Contact name/email OR website for details and registration
12th-14th February	VinoVision	Paris, France	www.vinovisionparis.com
15th-17th February	Pink, International Rosé Festival	Cannes, France	www.pinkrosefestival.com
12th-13th March	RAW Wine Fair	London, UK	www.rawwine.com
19th-21st March	Prowein	Düsseldorf, Germany	www.prowein.com
9th-12th April	Vinitaly	Verona, Italy	www.vinitaly.com/en
7th-8th May	Real Wine Fair	London, UK	www.therealwinefair.com
8th-11th May	ProWine Asia	Hong Kong	www.prowineasia.com
9th-11th May	Fenavin	Ciudad Real, Spain	www.fenavin.com
22nd-24th May	London Wine Fair	London, UK	www.londonwinefair.com

16th-18th June	IWE China	Guangzhou, China	http://www.yfzlw.com/en/
18th-21st June	Vinexpo	Bordeaux, France	www.vinexpobordeaux.com/en/

London tastings February - April 2017

DATE	Event/Tasting	Contact name/email OR website for details and registration
1st February	Kosher Food & Wine Experience	kedemlondon@redkitepr.com
1st February	Koshu of Japan	www.koshuofjapan.co.uk
6th February	Advantage Austria	https://goo.gl/3ZowHK
16th February	Fitou Forever	http://ubifrance.formstack.com/forms/fitou
17th February	CWW visit to the Wine Society	andrea.warren@btinternet.com
21st February	Viñateras! A Spanish wine revolution	jo@indigowine.com
27th February	Swiss Fine Wine	https://goo.gl/wcND66
28th February	AWE Alto Adige and Napa (CWW invited)	andrea.warren@btinternet.com
28th February	Vineyards of Hampshire	events@vineyardsofhampshire.co.uk
1st March	SITT Spring	www.sittastings.com
8th March	Grandes Pagos de España	angeline@bespokedrinksmedia.com
8th March	Wines of Saint Chinian	http://suddefrance.co.uk/register-saint-chinian/
9th March	Wines from Spain	celine@bouteiller.co.uk
13th March	Oregon & Washington State Annual tasting	kate@hilltopwines.co.uk
15th March	Grand Cercle des vins de Bordeaux (en Primeurs)	laure.monrozier@businessfrance.fr
24th March	The New Bulgaria	ivo@baiw.org
28th March	Crémant	laure.monrozier@businessfrance.fr
4th April	Wines of Portugal	philippa@cubecom.co.uk
13th April	Alternative varieties	kirsty.savory@wineaustralia.com
17th April	Champagne Growers	laure.monrozier@businessfrance.fr

